

Annan voices 'deep concern'

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed "disappointment and deep concern" Tuesday that Israel had begun construction on a housing settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, defying international opposition. Mr. Annan appealed to Israeli and Palestinian authorities "to find mutually acceptable solutions and proceed with peace negotiations," a press release said. Diplomatic sources said that Arab states at the United Nations would meet Wednesday to discuss a response to Tuesday's start of construction of the new Jewish enclave on Jabal Abu Ghneim. The sources said the Arab countries could introduce their own resolution following a European-sponsored resolution on March 7 opposing the Israel. The United States used its power of veto as a permanent member of the Security Council to block adoption of the European resolution.

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Majali asked to form government; Kabariti resigns today

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein has asked Abdul Salam Majali, a former prime minister, to form the next government and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti is expected to submit his resignation today (Wednesday), informed sources said Tuesday.

No reasons were immediately given for the move, which ended months of speculation over the next government. "Dr. Majali has started consultations on the make-up of his government" after the King asked him to form the next



olution," Mr. Kabariti pushed through a series of economic reforms that all his predecessors had hesi-

tated to adopt. This included the potentially explosive issue of lifting subsidies on wheat and fodder that led to an outburst of violent protests for two days in the south in mid-August. Having successfully overcome that crisis, Mr. Kabariti was expected to lead further economic reforms, and the expected switch in government came as a surprise to many who had predicted that the deputy from Aqaba would continue in his job and supervise the next parliamentary elections. Mr. Kabariti also successfully led efforts that resulted in a dramatic



improvement in Jordan's relations with some of the Gulf states strained during the 1990-91 crisis sparked

by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Dr. Majali, who headed Jordan's delegation in peace negotiations with Israel since the launch of the Madrid peace conference in October 1991, formed his first government in May 1994 and successfully guided the negotiations that led to the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October of that year. His government was followed in January 1995 by a cabinet headed by then Sharif (now Prince) Zeid Ben Shaker, who handed over the helm to Mr. Kabariti in February 1996. Among the immediate tasks facing the expected



Majali government is supervising the next parliamentary elections as well as enacting a series of

legislation, mostly related to economic liberalisation, in the interim as temporary laws. The King, in a television interview this month, outlined his vision of a new modern state of Jordan through a series of sweeping reforms that touch upon almost every aspect of life in the country. He indicated in that interview that it was then too early to say whether Mr. Kabariti was the prime minister to be entrusted with the task, which included major reforms in the administrative system as well as approaches to many internal issues.



Armed Israeli soldiers block the way and a Palestinian youth restrains others as Palestinians demonstrate in Beit Sahour against Israel's groundbreaking in the nearby Jabal Abu Ghneim as work begins on a Jewish settlement there (Reuters photo)

Israelis begin work on Jabal Abu Ghneim; Palestinians hold back violent protests

Israeli bulldozers wrecked peace process — Hussein 'Death sentence' put on Arafat-Netanyahu meeting

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli bulldozers broke ground Tuesday for a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem despite world condemnation and intelligence warnings that the decision would unleash violent Palestinian protests. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat called on his people to avoid violence over the project, but a spokesman said the start of work had put a "death sentence" on efforts to arrange a summit meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to defuse the crisis. Helicopters hovered above as hundreds of troops in riot gear, including snipers crouching behind boulders, blocked off the pine-covered hill on the edge of the city where the settlement called Har Homa is to be built for Jews. Three hours after the start of construction, there were scattered Palestinian protests. Asked by journalists at his Gaza office if he had called on his people not to

Jordan urges Israel to reverse move if it wants to preserve peace process

By Tareq Ayyoub Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan on Tuesday renewed a call on the Israeli government not to go ahead with constructing a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem and warned that continued settlement building in the occupied territories would destroy the peace process. Information Minister Marwan Muasher, briefing the press after a regular session of the Council of Ministers, also said Jordan was continuing efforts to resolve the crisis in the peace process posed by Israel's move to build a Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem. Reports in the Israeli press said His Majesty King Hussein was trying to arrange a three-way meeting among Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and himself in Amman in a bid to resolve the crisis.

But no confirmation of the report was available in Amman. Dr. Muasher would only say that Jordan "will continue its efforts." "There are continuous efforts by Jordan. I can't disclose (the details) now, but our efforts are continuing with all parties to safeguard the peace process in the region." The minister said Jordan's stand on Arab East Jerusalem and Israel's settlement policy was clear. "We regard Arab East Jerusalem as part of the Arab territories (which Israel) occupied in 1967," he said. "We regard the settlements as contradicting international law and the agreements signed between the Palestinians and Israel as well as (Jordan) and Israel, particularly the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty." "We call upon the Israeli government to reverse its decision if we are to preserve the peace process

peaceful atmosphere that has started to prevail after the signing of Hebron agreement," Dr. Muasher said. The minister's comments followed a decision by the Israeli government earlier in the day to start construction on Jabal Abu Ghneim. Israeli bulldozers and engineers started work at the site Tuesday afternoon. Dr. Muasher said no date was fixed for the King's visit to the U.S. but voiced hope that it will be fixed soon. The King was scheduled to travel to the U.S. last Friday but postponed it following the killing of seven Israeli schoolgirls in Baqoura on Thursday. The King cut short his visit to Spain and came back to Amman following the incident. During Tuesday's session, the Cabinet endorsed the appointment of Mohammad Amin, director of Press and Publication Department as secretary general of the Information Ministry.

Kabariti, in obvious farewell speech in Senate, cites his government's record of democracy

By Maria Bizri Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti said Tuesday that his government saw democracy as the means to enhance dialogue to solve the problems of the society, realising its ambitions and building its institutions. Mr. Kabariti, in an emotional and what had all the trimmings of a farewell speech to Parliament, said his government, which took office in February 1996, "did not engage in slogans and speeches but went into the details and sought to link people's rights with their responsibilities." As it turned out later Tuesday evening, Mr. Kabariti was expected to submit the resignation of his government to His Majesty the King on Wednesday and former Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali had already started consultations on forming a new government

after receiving a mandate from the Monarch. Addressing the Upper House of Parliament's last regular session, Mr. Kabariti sought to highlight his government's commitment to democracy and the measures he had adopted in this spirit in line with directives from the King. "Unlike those who talk about democracy but have no faith in it, do not and cannot practice it or use it for their own interest, we consider democracy a responsible tool for control that protects against sliding down towards all forms of corruption," said Mr. Kabariti. "We have carried the spirit of democracy in our conscience as a conceptual framework and a working plan that would enable us to execute decisions with the goal to grow and develop according to the aims envisioned by His Majesty King Hussein," Mr. Kabariti stated, adding that the end of the parliamentary session

does not mean the end of the country's democratisation process. Mr. Kabariti stressed that Jordan's democratic march had been responsible, comprehensive and in line with the Hashemite plan, adding that "Jordan and Jordanians will remain united with the Hashemite renaissance message under the leadership of His Majesty King Hussein." Speaker Ahmad Lawzi said that the Upper House had shown a great deal of responsibility in carrying out its legislative duties and has served the interest of the Kingdom diligently. During Tuesday's session, the Senate approved an amendment to the 1997 Aqaba Region Authority draft law, a draft law dissolving the Housing Bank Law, and a draft law on the Jordan Cooperative Organisation. The amendment to the Aqaba Region Authority law stipulates that the city's board has the right to

implement comprehensive plans for developing areas within the Aqaba region. The law also gives the government the right to change the borders of the Aqaba region as the Cabinet finds fit. "The purpose of this law is to demarcate the borders of the Aqaba and Petra regions," Mr. Kabariti said, noting the government's desire to incorporate certain bedouin tribes to the Aqaba municipal borders where they can benefit from better services. Mr. Kabariti added that there was a strong desire to turn Wadi Rum into a wildlife reserve within the boundaries of the Aqaba region in order to protect it from environmental degradation. The Senate also ratified a draft law cancelling the Housing Bank Law. The bank, which was initially envisaged as a tool for stimulating the con-

(Continued on page 7)

Hawari among 4 killed in accidents

By Rana Hussein Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Four people were killed Tuesday in three different road accidents. Among the dead was the head of the Arab Potash Company (APC), Suleiman Hawari. Thirteen people were injured, four of them seriously, official reports said. Hawari, 50, was killed when his car collided with a pick-up truck packed with a family of seven, according to the Civil Defence Department (CDD). He was returning to Amman from the APC in the Jordan Valley when the incident occurred. Abdeh Khalifeh Khleifat, 40, who was riding in the pick-up truck, was also killed in the accident which occurred at around 4:00 p.m. on the Zara road along the Dead Sea. Six other people, between nine and 35 years of age, were injured and were rushed to north Shuneh government hospital. No further details were available. Hawari, who was director general of the APC, was born in Thar Al Ra'ss village in Karak. He finished his education from Karak secondary school and studied at the University of Jordan where he graduated from the Faculty of Com-



Suleiman Hawari

Defence teams many for Dakamseh in 'political expression'

By Lola Kellani Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Several groups have sprung up to defend in court to the Jordanian soldier held in connection with Thursday's shooting attack at Baqoura, but the gestures were seen more of a political expression than a legal issue. The Jordan Bar Association (JBA), a strong opponent of normalisation of Jordanian-Israeli relations, on Tuesday also questioned the right of other groups in the country to defend Ahmad Dakamseh, 27, who was arrested immediately after the attack. Seven Israeli schoolgirls were killed and four others wounded in the attack as they were visiting the Baqoura area. The JBA, which took the lead in arranging an aborted visit to the Dakamseh family in an expression of solidarity on Monday, was on Tuesday waiting for a response from the president of the military courts, Major-General Mohammad Mango, to a request that lawyers be allowed access to Ahmad Dakamseh. "We will announce a defence team for Dakamseh as soon as we hear from (Gen.) Mango," said JBA board member Sameer Kherfan. "We have

Jordan and Israel plan 'peace park' ISRAEL AND Jordan will build a park for children at the site where a Jordanian soldier killed seven Israeli girls last week, in an effort to restore faith in Arab-Israeli peacemaking. "This park will be the 'peace park'," said General Rashid Abu Mansour, who headed a Jordanian team that came to Israel Tuesday to discuss the concept. Moshe Kochanovsky, a defence ministry official who headed the team that met with the Jordanians, said the new park would be built in the Baqoura area, where the shooting attack occurred Thursday. "Children from both areas will be able to play there and we hope this will contribute to peace between our two countries," he said, adding he hoped it would be the first of many Israeli-Jordanian joint projects in the area. The idea was raised by Israeli officials during a condolence visit to the bereaved families by been waiting for a reply for the past two days. In the meantime, (Continued on page 7)

Fahd: Israel endangering peace process

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia's King Fahd has accused Israel of endangering the Middle East peace process with its plans to build a new settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The "new settlements are in total contradiction with U.N. resolutions and the Madrid Conference" which launched the peace process in October 1991, King Fahd said at a cabinet meeting overnight Monday, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

"These steps are also a violation of principles agreed by the international community to preserve Jerusalem's demographic and geographic character and not to try to hide its Islamic and Arab identity," the king said.

The king stressed "the constant improvement in relations with Britain, especially on the political, technical, and commercial level," adding that Riyadh hoped to boost "constructive cooperation" with London.

King Fahd voiced his "complete satisfaction with the results" of the visit Defence Minister Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz made to London on March 12.

The presence of Saudi opposition leader Mubammad Al Massara in England has marred otherwise

good relations between the two countries.

The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states plan to meet here next week to discuss dangers to the Arab-Israeli peace process, a Gulf official said Tuesday.

The official said the Gulf ministers will try to forge a common stand here next Tuesday before joining Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo on March 30-31 to discuss how Israeli settlements undermine the peace talks.

The Arab League meeting will be chaired by Saudi Arabia.

During the two-day meeting next week, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign ministers will also discuss the regional tour of the Iranian foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, said the Gulf official who requested anonymity.

The GCC is composed of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

The Saudi Press agency quoted Esmat Abdul Meguid, the secretary general of the Arab League who was visiting the kingdom, as saying the Cairo meeting would focus on the peace process and Israeli settlements, especially in Jerusalem.

Musa meets rival Somali leaders gathered in Cairo

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa on Monday held talks here with Somali faction leaders aimed at finding ways of reaching national reconciliation in the war-torn country.

"Musa met a delegation of Somali faction leaders representing the National Salvation Council to examine efforts under way to reach comprehensive national reconciliation in Somalia," a statement by the ministry said.

Mr. Musa underscored "the need for reconciliation between all Somali factions and to maintain the unity of Somalia and its security in order to achieve stability in the Horn of Africa," the statement said.

Egypt will help back the efforts of international and regional organisations to achieve an end to the crisis in Somalia as well as pursue contacts with all Somali factions, the statement

said. The council's current chairman, Mohammed Adnour, said they had asked Egypt to intervene to persuade Somalia's key warlord and self-styled "president" Hussein Muhammad Aidede to join a reconciliation meeting.

"We have asked Egypt to mediate to bring the factions of Mr. Aidede and Ibrahim Agal to a meeting of national reconciliation and the foreign minister of Egypt has agreed," he said after the talks with Mr. Musa.

Somalia has been torn by a civil war since the fall of its leader Mohammed Siad Barre in January 1991 and has been without a government.

Representatives from 26 rival Somali factions — except the Aidede faction — set up the National Salvation Council in January ahead of creating a transitional government.



Palestinian National Authority member Faisal Al Hussein stands wrapped against the cold in a traditional Arab coat at the sit-in encampment he launched on Monday near the planned Israeli settlement site in Arab East Jerusalem (Reuters photo)

Israeli inspectors find massive tax fraud among religious Jews

TEL AVIV (AP) — Tax inspectors disguised as ultra-orthodox Jews have descended on an Israeli city and uncovered massive tax evasion Monday.

"Over 40 per cent of the retailers we checked were failing to register their takings," finance ministry official Uzi Bezael said after the raid on the religious Tel Aviv suburb of Bnei Brak.

"The national average is only seven per cent."

Mr. Bezael said some in some cases the undeclared takings ran to "tens of thousands of shekels." A shekel is worth about 30 cents.

The two-day undercover operation — which ended Monday — was mounted because the inspectors find it difficult to operate in ultra-orthodox communities where they are easily spotted by the shopkeepers.

Roughly 10 per cent of Israel's 4.6 million Jews are ultra-orthodox, easily distinguishable from the secular

majority by the side curls, black top coats and black hats among the men and long heims and head scarves among the married women.

To blend in with their surroundings, the 44 inspectors wore black suits, black hats, false beards and side-locks. The women wore wigs and hats, long-sleeved long dresses and thick, black stockings.

Television footage of the operation showed inspectors operating in pairs, with the woman walking deferentially a few paces behind the man. As they entered each store they were careful to touch the Mezuzah — a little box on the doorpost containing a tiny piece of parchment with passages from the scriptures — and kiss the fingers that touched it.

One inspector was puzzled when children began to laugh at him ducking into an alley, he found that half of his moustache was missing.

Egypt holds 2 for selling and hiding antiquities

CAIRO (AP) — Two men were arrested Monday in southern Egypt for trading and hiding antiquities dating as far back as pharaonic times, police officials said.

They said 12 pieces of artifacts were seized from the homes of Mohammed Ismail Ali and Nagui Farag Salib in the southern city of Assuit.

The artifacts go back to the pharaonic, Coptic, Greek, Roman and Ottoman times, said the officials, who spoke on condition of customary anonymity.

They said eight pieces were found in the home of Ali, a farmer. Some of them are up to 5,000 years old when the pharaohs ruled Egypt. Others date to the Greek era 395 to 640 A.D. and to the period when the Ottomans ruled the country between the 16th and early 20th centuries.

Police seized a clay pot, two Roman coins and a Coptic book, entitled "The Holy Redemption," from the home of Salib, who

U.S. fights to clinch UAE fighter order

ABU DHABI (Agencies) — U.S. plane maker Lockheed Martin vowed Tuesday to fight to snatch a multi-billion-dollar deal with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from new frontrunners Rafale of France and the British-led Eurofighter project.

"We will adjust to this new development by renewing our commitment to winning this competition," said Keith Mordoff, spokesman for Lockheed Martin. "We will do whatever it takes to win the competition."

In a surprise move Monday, the UAE said the European joint venture Eurofighter was now in contention for the estimated \$6 billion contract to supply up to 80 warplanes for after 2000.

"We are confident the F-16 (Fighting Falcon) will remain extremely competitive, as the lowest-price, high performance aircraft available today," Mr. Mordoff told AFP.

"As far as we are concerned, we respect any decision that will be taken by the UAE," he added.

A UAE military spokesman said the U.S. proposal has run into unspecified technical problems, while Rafale and the British-led Eurofighter 2000 venture have come up with new attractive offers.

The deal has been touted as the UAE's biggest arms contract and the last major military aircraft deal of this century, sparking fierce competition in the West.

"The French have made a very good offer ... better than before," Colonel Obaide Al Kirby told a press conference, in an invitation for the United States to follow suit.

He said the F-16 was still in competition but "there is a delay because of different opinions between our team and the American side on different issues."

The UAE has been in the market since the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait for next generation fighters to ensure air superiority after 2000 and carry out ground attack missions.

Defence deal on course

A senior U.S. military official said on Monday the United States and the UAE had overcome obstacles hindering full implementation of their 1994 defence accord.

"Obstacles which have been facing the defence agreement between the UAE and the USA have been solved and a memorandum will be signed very soon," assistant army secretary Gilbert Decker told reporters on the sidelines of Abu Dhabi's IDEX arms show.

He did not give an exact date for the signing, which he said would not take place at an official ceremony but through diplomatic channels.

Richard Wilson, defence attaché at the U.S. embassy in Abu Dhabi, said one problem had been the question of which country's laws would apply if U.S. military staff committed an offence in the UAE.

"We agreed to respect the laws and traditions of each country," he said, but gave no further details. He did not say what other obstacles there had been.

UAE, Germany sign defence agreement

Germany has signed a defence cooperation agreement with the United Arab Emirates, the first such accord between Bonn and a Gulf state, newspapers said here Tuesday. The agreement signed at an international arms exhibition in Abu Dhabi calls for exchange of expertise in military technology, the arms industry and servicing, the Khaleej Times newspaper said. Forty-five German companies are taking part in IDEX '97. The deal was possible following an easing of German restrictions on arms exports, Germany's Deputy Defence Minister Bernd Wiltz said before the agreement was formally announced.

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. calls Israeli's remarks inflammatory

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States took exception Monday to comments by Israeli Justice Minister Tsahi Hanegbi, who threatened to send Palestinian President Yasser Arafat into exile if he orders a violent reaction to the Har Homa project. "The United States certainly does not agree with the comments by the minister of justice. They are inflammatory and unacceptable because Chairman Arafat has a place, and that place is in Gaza and the West Bank," U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said. Mr. Hanegbi had said in an interview: "Anybody who opens the suitcase of weapons, may find himself very soon packing a suitcase and wandering back and forth between Tulaia and Baghdad as he did for many years." Mr. Burns said when there are political disagreements, people should negotiate them "seriously and privately and peacefully, and not resort to these types of outlandish threats."

Two Israeli soldiers punished

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Two Israeli soldiers have been sentenced to 21 days of detention for mistreating Palestinian youths in the West Bank city of Hebron, an army spokesman said Tuesday. "From an investigation that army officers carried out in the area, it became clear that one soldier stationed there slapped one boy and another pushed a second youth," the spokesman said. The youths had provoked the soldiers by swearing at and taunting them, the spokesman added. The soldier who hit a youth received 21 days in a military jail and the other will not be allowed to leave his army base for the same amount of time. Israeli troops control about 20 per cent of Hebron where some 400 Jewish settlers and 30,000 Palestinians live. The Israeli army withdrew from most of the city of 120,000 in January, remaining behind to guard enclaves where some 400 Jewish settlers live.

2 die in Qatari helicopter crash

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — A Qatari military helicopter crashed Monday when it flew into a high-tension power cable, killing two air force pilots aboard, the official Qatari News Agency reported. In a Monday night report, the agency quoted a military spokesman as saying the helicopter crashed during a flight back to base after taking part in war games. He did not identify the type of the aircraft and newspapers on Tuesday said the crash caused a 30-minute power outage in the Matar Qadeem district of Doha, the Qatari capital. The military spokesman identified the two men aboard as Squadron Leader Saeed Ajab Al Hajiri and Lieutenant Hadi hajaj Al Hajiri.

Iran raises minimum wage by about 23%

TEHRAN (R) — Iran is raising its minimum wage by almost 23 per cent, Tehran Radio said on Monday. It quoted Deputy Labour and Social Affairs Minister Mohsen Khajenouri as saying the minimum daily wage would be 8,482 rials from the start of the Iranian new year on March 21 — 22.8 per cent higher than the current 6,907 rials. The new minimum wage is equal to \$2.83 at the official exchange rate. Faced with an official annual inflation rate of about 25 per cent, Iran tries to keep basic goods at a affordable prices for low-income groups by subsidising them. The budget for the next year includes \$1.4 billion earmarked for food subsidies. A senior Iranian official said in June that people earning less than 680,000 rials a month in Tehran were beneath the poverty line (\$1 = 3,000 rials at the official exchange rate).

Earthquake hits Iranian capital

TEHRAN (AFP) — An earthquake measuring four degrees on the open-ended Richter Scale hit the Iranian capital on Tuesday but apparently caused no casualties or damage, officials said. The tremor struck at 9:06 a.m. (0536 GMT) and was felt in several districts of Tehran. The epicenter was registered 50 kilometers northeast of Tehran around the Damavand region. A 5.5-degree quake hit the northwestern region of Ardebil on Feb. 28, leaving around 1,000 people dead, 2,600 injured and another 60,000 homeless. The entire Iranian plateau is earthquake prone.

Kurd refugees sent back to Turkey

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The first batch of a group of 170 Turkish Kurds who entered Sarajevo in a bid to enter Germany illegally were sent back to Istanbul on Monday, police said. Sarajevo police spokesman Adnan Kosovac told the independent daily Oslobođenje that they left here by plane Monday. The 170 were among 478 Turkish Kurds who entered Sarajevo between March 1-15. They did not need visas to enter Bosnia but the Kurds had no papers to go to a third country. Ahmet Yazal, a Turkish embassy official here, told the paper that the Kurds "came here in order to reach one of the European Union countries." Sarajevo newspapers said the Bosnian mafia was offering to smuggle Kurds into Germany through Bosnia, providing them with forged documents for about 5,000 German marks (\$3,000).

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Adventures of the Rainbow Pond
14:30 Flintstones
15:00 French Programmes
16:00 America's Funniest People
16:25 Escape from Jupiter
16:50 Doc. — Challenge
17:15 Border Town
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Grace Under Fire
20:00 Documentary
20:30 Challenges
21:10 Drama — Spencer for Hire
22:00 News in English
22:25 Cobra
23:00 Hart to Hart

PRAYER TIMES

04:20 Fajr
05:38 (Sunrise) Duha
11:43 Dhuhur
15:10 'Asr
17:49 Maghreb
19:07 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifelh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

ing later northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman 04/07

Malhas, J. Amman 01/18

Deserts 04/10

Jordan Valley 08/15

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 09, Aqaba 30

Humidity readings: Amman 85 per cent, Aqaba 54 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 894788

Dr. Bassam Karadshih 739200

Dr. Salim Dababneh 776751

Dr. Khalid Abdo 657129

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 890280

Al Asema pharmacy 637085

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Naroukh pharmacy 623672

Najib pharmacy 347632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484

Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Samir Al Lawzi 989601

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111

637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 343402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Ahdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 15615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6

Akileh Maternity, 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

Al-Munasher Hospital 845845

Al-Munasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 771013

Al-Bashir 775111/26

Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 1021275555

Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

Akileh Maternity, 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

Al-Munasher Hospital 845845

Al-Munasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 771013

Al-Bashir 775111/26

Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 1021275555

Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275



HRH Princess Rahma Bint Al Hassan Tuesday opens a new office of the Crown Prince Award in Irbid as part of the Kingdom's celebrations of HRH Crown Prince Hassan's 50th birthday. Prince Hassan was born March 20, 1947. Princess Rahma also gave the start signal for a cycling trip to Aqaba in which competitors for the Crown Prince Award are taking part. The Crown Prince Award recognises combined achievements of Jordan's excellent youth.

Prince Hassan meets with visiting Italian official

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan conferred at the Royal Court Tuesday with visiting Italian Director of the Defence Studies Institute General Carlo Jean.

The two reviewed current developments in the Middle East as well as obstacles facing the peace process.

Jordan is seeking to establish a comprehensive regional peace, Prince Hassan stated, while the Kingdom is also seeking to strengthen European relations with the

Middle East.

The Barcelona conference grouped delegations from both sides and complements the Middle East peace process which started in Madrid in 1991.

Prince Hassan emphasised the importance of consecrating and intensifying efforts to help regional socio-economic developments which, he said, contribute to the security and stability of the region.

Italian Ambassador to Jordan Francesco Cerulli attended the meeting.

Graduates to help alleviate learning difficulties

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The 39 graduates of the Learning Difficulties Programme of the Princess Sarvath Community College (PSCC) can now put their new knowledge and skills to much needed use in the Kingdom in order to help establish learning disability facilities in various schools.

These are the first graduates of the programme which involved one year of training at the National Centre for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), an affiliate branch of the college.

"The ultimate goal of this project is to offer remedial humanitarian services to the great number of our students who suffer from learning difficulties without receiving proper attention," Dean Rami Waqfi told the class Monday at the graduation ceremony.

Dr. Waqfi praised the vision and effort of HRH Princess Sarvath in working towards the establishment of the programme.

The Princess, who chairs the college board, presented each member of the class with a diploma.

The graduates were all teachers at either public or private schools. They will now return to their respective schools or seek employment elsewhere

where they will be able to offer their newly-acquired proficiency to resource centres planned for the Kingdom's schools.

A learning difficulty or disability is a disorder manifested in the form of having a significant difficulty in acquiring [one or more] skills necessary to listen, speak, read, write, or logically reason.

"Some of the most brilliant students have learning disabilities which discourage them from continuing their education, even Albert Einstein had a learning disability," executive assistant to the Princess and PSCC board member Khadijah Siraj said.

A learning-disabled child may exhibit one or more of the following symptoms: a short attention span, general distraction, dyslexia, emotional disturbances and hyperactivity.

"Disabilities that go undetected can cause serious damage to children, and if they are not dealt with properly, may lead to low self-esteem, underachievement, [repeated] failure and a subsequent dropping out of school," Dr. Waqfi said.

The objective of the centre is to promote public awareness of learning disabilities, train teachers that they might diagnose and teach disabled learners, and

become a national institution in the field of learning difficulties, officials said.

Statistical research to identify the number of disabled children in Jordan are also underway, and should be completed in two years, Programme Coordinator Suha Hassan told the Jordan Times.

The creation of the centre was the result of the combined efforts of Princess Sarvath, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), and funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

An agreement between PSCC and ACCC in December of 1992 led to the training of 10 teachers in the field of learning disabilities in Canada and Jordan over three years.

In 1994, the PSCC signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education to train a number of its teachers at the centre.

"It is the aim of both the centre and the Ministry of Education to have a resource room teacher in all of our schools," Ms. Siraj said.

The graduation ceremony was attended by the Minister of Higher Education Abdullah Ensour, the Ministry of Education Munther Masri and the Canadian Ambassador to Jordan Michael Molloy.

Crown Prince calls for modernisation, independence of judiciary system

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan Monday night called for the modernisation of judicial institutions in Jordan in order to ensure full independence of the judicial authority, improve living standards of justices and raise standards of efficiency and performance.

Minister of Justice Abdul Karim Dughmi delivered the address on behalf of the Crown Prince at the graduation ceremony of lawyers from the Judicial Institute (JI).

Lawyers will begin their apprenticeship to ultimately reach judgeship.

The Crown Prince main-

tained that the Judicial Council, currently in charge of the institute, should remove obstacles which impede improvement and modernisation.

He remarked that Jordan is currently passing through a critical stage, requiring a re-examination and ensuring betterment of national institutions.

Prince Hassan affirmed that "the existing legislation which governs the courts is constantly being criticised as not catering to the requirements of modernity and falling behind developments in judicial work."

The existing judicial law was introduced in 1972.

however, since that time, many changes, concepts and theories upon which that law was based have changed and therefore, the Crown Prince affirmed, there is need for modernisation and improvement — from the training of judges to retiring or promoting members of the judicial authority.

"The judicial council, entrusted to introduce changes, should pursue the process of change, recruit and appoint lawyers known for integrity and competence so as to maintain a strong judiciary system in the Kingdom," he added.

The Jordanian judicial

system is passing through a critical stage, requiring improvements and modernisation, in order to pursue its work free of bias, favouritism, regionalism, religious or partisan bigotry or fanaticism, all of which are a danger to the system," Prince Hassan added.

"It has become obligatory to introduce reforms into the judicial system in order to ensure social justice," the Crown Prince admonished. "If people lose faith in the system they may resort to taking the law into their own hands."

The Crown Prince affirmed that improvements and modernisation can be

achieved through training programmes for judges in Jordan as well as scholarships abroad.

If the judiciary is to achieve justice and protect freedoms, the judicial authority should enjoy absolute independence from any influence or pressures, Prince Hassan stated.

Training should result in the creation of a highly respected judicial system providing judges with different specialisations, he concluded.

European expert emphasises role of 'soft' security for the region

By Sacha Baggili
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A leading European security expert focused on the European belief in the importance of "soft" security in the Mediterranean region, the necessity of coordinating European and American initiatives in the area and the need to adjust the largely military security institutions, created during the cold war, to the new strategic environment.

Although the concept of Mediterranean security is complex and multifaceted in nature, focus should be placed on the soft, economic rather than the hard military aspects of security, President of the Centre of Higher Defence Studies in Rome Carlo Jean said.

"Security in the Mediterranean [region] is mainly economic, social, cultural and identity-related. It is only marginally a military issue," he affirmed, during his lecture at the Institute of Diplomacy Monday.

Mr. Jean asserted that, as security in the Mediterranean is not a homogeneous issue, there is no basis for a common security system as exists in a European context.

"On the other hand, a cooperative security system, a 'broad security' model attaching priority to the 'soft' rather than 'hard' aspects of security, is possible," asserted the expert, who carries the title of Lt. general, and who was the

military advisor of the Italian president between 1990-1992.

He stated that such a cooperative security regime in the Mediterranean must be based on a politico-strategic agreement between Europe and the United States, to identify common objectives and policies and devise a coordination system among the various institutions.

This would prevent "competition and conflict" which would impede the development of a guaranteed comprehensive security in the region.

He asserted that in the post cold war era, "the military component is only one element, and sometimes a marginal one, in global security."

According to Mr. Jean, the U.S. and Europe have adopted different and often diverging Mediterranean policies.

"Whereas North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and European Union (EU) policies towards Eastern Europe are convergent and multilateral, their Mediterranean policies are fragmented into a series of autonomous initiatives, differing both in motives and objectives," he maintained.

He expressed the European view that the Mediterranean is a geo-political region with its own individuality, "a liquid continent" which is linked to Europe and which must be turned into an area of peace stabil-

ity and co-prosperity." Mr. Jean contrasted the European concern with economic and social security in the Mediterranean to the divergent U.S. security concerns in the region.

He said that for the United States security primarily means politico-strategic security and focuses on the Gulf and on the Middle East peace process.

"For them, economic soft security, or stabilisation through development, holds a secondary role," he asserted.

Against the backdrop of the apparent EU rejection of its traditional role as bankroller of the Middle East peace process, and its search for a higher-profile in the Middle East, which the U.S. as sponsor to the peace process has ruled out, Mr. Jean described strong suspicions that European criticism of Israeli policies is "aimed at currying favour with the Arabs, rather than entering the control room of the peace agreements."

In explaining the European inclination towards "soft" security in the Mediterranean, he said that priority is given to prevention of mass immigration "deriving from the ongoing economic crisis in North Africa."

He also touched upon European concern over the increase of terrorist activities in Europe as well as organised crime in the Mediterranean.

Whereas the European territory was shielded from

the East-West conflict, it may be directly affected by the "Mediterranean," he asserted, pointing to the "presence of 12-15 million Muslim immigrants in Europe, whose process of integration is proving very difficult."

Mr. Jean insisted that the Southern Mediterranean countries are seeking a new international position, but that endeavours to exploit European-U.S. differences "in order to achieve room for manoeuvring and freedom of action" have been hampered.

He credited this to the central role played by the U.S. in the Mediterranean, the deficiencies in Europe's political and strategic integration and the divergent policies followed by the individual European nations.

Mr. Jean said that the EU identified its long-term objectives at the 1996 Barcelona conference, which initiated a series of programmes for the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP).

"The EMP is developing rapidly, even though it takes into consideration only marginal and 'soft' aspects of security rather than 'hard' ones," he said, adding that "it remains to be seen how this initiative will be affected by the difficulties in the Middle East peace process."

However, he predicted that the creation of a Mediterranean free trade

zone would step up Europe's ability to influence conflicts in the Southern Mediterranean region by exerting economic pressures, and that increasing interdependence and common interests among the Southern Mediterranean states would further enhance security.

"The various security initiatives launched by Western organisations should be harmonised within the larger context of the Atlantic Alliances," said Mr. Jean, pointing particularly to NATO initiatives which should be harmonised and coordinated with the Barcelona action plan.

There is a need for NATO to "develop a more detailed policy which identifies objectives and possible cooperation initiatives," he said.

In describing American weight in the security sector, which far outweighs that of Europe, he insisted that "speaking of security" in the Mediterranean without mentioning the U.S. is like speaking of omelettes without mentioning eggs."

He concluded his presentation to the audience of government and military officials, public figures, diplomats and academics, by reiterating, "the security basket of the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean partnership would lack any concrete meaning, were it not coordinated with the U.S."

What's Going On

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

FIFTH THEATRE FESTIVAL

*"The Damned Wedding" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.

MEDIA FORUM

*Panel discussion (in Arabic) on "Micro-Finance in Economic Development" (Panelist Dr. Taleh Rifai, Director General of Investment Promotion Corporation, and other micro-finance economists) at the American Centre, Amman at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*ISO-9000 Show at Philadelphia Hotel, until March 23.

*Display of products for Mother's Day at Jordan River Design, Jabal Amman, (Tel. 613081/2), until March 21.

*Paintings by Saadi Dawood at the Orient Gallery, Issam Ajlouni St., Shmeisani, until March 31.

*Display of handwoven products marking Mother's Day at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until March 21.

*Spring exhibition 1997 at Orfali Art Gallery Umm Utheima, until April 6.

*Artworks by Mohammad Ali Shaker at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh until March 31.

*Exhibition of Saudi products at Amman International Exhibit Centre, Marj Al Hanan, until March 20.

*Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

Islamists clinch student elections

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Islamists Tuesday clinched 71 out of 80 student council seats at the University of Jordan, up from 67 in last year's elections, and are dominating the council for the seventh time.

University students who turned out for Monday's elections represented only 56 per cent of the 20,128 eligible voters, according to one university official.

"Only 11,464 students from 13 faculties exercised their right to vote for the 217 candidates," the official said.

He attributed the low turnout and the Islamic landslide to the "absence of the silent majority and the carelessness of graduate students whose voting percentage was low."

According to the official, the Islamist students were committed, financially supported, and they conducted an organised and planned campaign, "and this is why they secured the high numbers of seats."

One fourth-year law student explained her non-participation thus, "I do not believe in these elections and I knew that Islamists were going to win in the end."

The student, who requested anonymity, charged that the Islamists only fight for their own causes and interests, which, she said, centre on more traditional Islamic positions, while other stu-

dents concentrate on more practical issues related to their academic needs and concerns.

"So, why should I waste my time and effort to vote?" she asked.

Winning candidate Abdullah Abu Hilaleh stated that the Islamist win was due to a high-publicity campaign and a reputation for honesty.

"We have proved our credibility, fought for many student causes and succeeded in amending the 60 per cent grade retake regulation to 75 per cent after continuous negotiations with the university administration," Mr. Abu Hilaleh, a third-year accounting student, said.

The 60 per cent grade regulation stipulated that students retaking courses they previously failed, can only attain a maximum score of 60 per cent.

"Our stand is Islamic and our priority is to serve students," Mr. Abu Hilaleh added.

Islamist candidates had called in their campaigns for fighting normalisation (with Israel); renewing the call for the formation of a General Union of Jordanian Students, and had said they would continue negotiations regarding an increase in university fees.

A third-year student from the Faculty of Dentistry said she voted for an Islamist candidate because he helped her and other students in their studying and in lectures.

"He is a hard-working

student who tries to help everyone, and I decided to vote for him regardless of his beliefs or background," she stated.

But a first-year engineering student stated that she voted for an independent candidate in an effort to prevent the Islamists from winning.

"My friends and I knew that the Islamists were probably going to win, but decided to vote for the independent candidates because we did not want the Islamists to control the student council," she said.

Of the 80-seat student council, 11 positions were won by women, the university official said. He added that 10 of the women were Islamists. A total of 31 women students ran as candidates.

The highest turnout of voters was in the Faculty of Pharmacy with 87.5 per cent, while the lowest turnout occurred in the Faculty of Educational Sciences with 44.8 per cent.

The university official stated that the university president must first endorse the results, then the newly elected student council will meet to elect a president and an organising committee.

Deputy accuses weekly of 'inserting statements'

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Amman Prosecutor Jamal Zou'bi Tuesday questioned Deputy Ahmad Oweid Abbad and Jihad Momani, both standing trial on charges of sowing societal division, over an article published in the weekly tabloid Shiban in June 1996.

Amman Deputy Ahbadi, in a 14-page defence statement, denied making any racial statements in his June 19 interview and asserted that the newspaper inserted statements unspoken by him.

The prosecutor questioned Dr. Ahbadi in regards to a headline, which appeared in the newspaper interview, quoting him as saying, "I will be relaxed if the Palestinians leave the country."

"Shiban distorted my statements and I did not say that," Dr. Ahbadi told the court.

He testified that he meant "not to insult Palestinians, but rather call for the liberation of Palestine and the

formation of an independent Palestinian state on its own land."

Formal charges, pressed against the two by the Amman prosecutor, include undermining national unity, inciting people to criminal acts and fuelling bigotry.

In August, the two men, who are being tried at the Court of First Instance, pleaded not guilty to the charges pressed against them.

Mr. Momani, former editor of the weekly Shiban, denied that he was the newspaper editor at the time the interview was published.

He testified that he was abroad and had no knowledge of the identity of the editor-in-chief during his absence.

Mr. Momani's Defence Lawyer Habs Shihoul told the Jordan Times Tuesday that Dr. Ahbadi was planning to file a lawsuit against the newspaper, charging that it distorted his statements in the June interview.

The case against the two was filed by Attorney Ahmad Haboul who

charged that Dr. Ahbadi's statements in the interview were racist and undermined national unity.

A statement from the interview, cited by Dr. Ahbadi, reads as follows: "There are several threats against Jordanian identity, both internal and external, as Jordan is menaced with becoming a substitute country for the Palestinians," and "Palestinians are not Jordanians under any circumstances."

In February, Mr. Haboul asked the court for JD 1 million, stating that if he wins the case he is planning to establish a centre to fight regionalism in the Kingdom.

At the end of the court session, Defence Attorneys Ahmad Momani and Shihoul asked the court for time to present evidence in the case and subpoena witnesses.

Presiding Judge Tawfiq Quesy postponed the case until April 14.

Zairean capital tense as support for Mobutu wanes

KINSHASA (R) — Zaire's embattled government has moved to ease frayed nerves in the tense capital Kinshasa, where popular support for veteran President Mobutu Sese Seko is fading fast.

The cabinet, meeting in emergency session Monday, dismissed rumours that a coup was imminent following major rebel gains in the east, that Zaire's notoriously undisciplined army was poised to run riot or that Mr. Mobutu was dead.

But many people in the usually lively city opted to stay home rather than venture onto the streets in the evening.

The name of rebel leader Laurent Kabila is on many lips in the city of five million people. Many people openly or privately welcome the prospect of a change of leadership. Others acknowledge that change is starting to look inevitable.

"At the moment it looks as though the doors are open for Mr. Kabila," one Zairean banker commented. "There is no-one left in Kinshasa who is strong enough to sustain a take over."

Mr. Mobutu, who has spent most of his time in Europe since prostate cancer surgery there in August, telephoned the ministers twice during their Monday meeting from his hospital bed in the Mediterranean principality of Monaco.

Mr. Mobutu's son and spokesman Mobutu Nzanga said there was no cause for concern over his father's health. "He came for extra medical tests. He will leave the hospital very soon to prepare for his return home," he said after visiting him.

But in Zaire's third city of Kisangani, which fell to the rebels Saturday, residents celebrated the departure of Mr. Mobutu's army as about 300 soldiers surrendered their weapons — apparently little moved by their defeat.

"I believe that winning the war is the easiest part of the job. Much more difficult is the restoration of the country destroyed by more than 30 years of Mobutu's regime," the local rebel commander, Mr. Kabila's son Joseph, 25, commented.

In Kinshasa, the cabinet appealed for calm.

"The government invites the people not to panic as this is both unjustified and fed by pure rumour," it said in a statement.

But one senior official said government ministers and Mobutu allies were among those most affected and panicked by the rumours of the president's deteriorating health and increasing concern over the loyalty of troops and their commanders.

Travel agents reported a post-weekend rush to book seats on flights out of the country. Planes to Europe and South Africa were the most popular.

In Kinshasa's central market, traders prepared to transfer their goods to safe houses, anticipating the mayhem that has regularly occurred after rebels have defeated the army.

"It's the habit of our soldiers to start looting so we have to

take precautions," one said.

Many Kinshasa residents say they are eager for a change from Mr. Mobutu, accused by opponents of ruining what is potentially one of Africa's richest nations, but few see Mr. Kabila as little more than a war leader.

An opinion poll in the city this month found just over 50 per cent of those questioned had a high opinion of Mr. Kabila but only 4 per cent said they would vote for him.

Meanwhile, the rebels who have captured a fifth of Zaire are now preparing for a two-pronged advance in Shaba region and the far north near the jungle home of President Mobutu, a regional military source said Monday.

The source, who closely monitors Africa's latest war between Mr. Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) and Zaire's mercenary-hacked army, said Shaba, a strategic copper- and cobalt-producing area, could fall within days.

"There is no doubt they are preparing for a rapid advance through Shaba. We have noticed a consolidation of forces in that area and the political climate seems to be in their favour," he said.

The ADFL, which launched its campaign in October, controls four towns in Shaba, an opposition hotbed and home to previous failed rebellions in Africa's third largest country.

The towns — Kalemie, Mobu, Manono and Pweto — were all taken without a fight after government troops fled rising popular anger.

The source, who asked not to be named, said the ADFL was moving the bulk of its frontline fighting units from Kisangani, Zaire's third largest city seized Saturday, on the route to the town of Buta 260 kilometres to the northwest.

Other rebel forces, buoyed by the capture of Kisangani — a diamond- and gold-producing centre and the war's biggest prize so far — were said to be moving to Buta from the town of Isiro, 320 kilometres to the east.

Buta is seen as strategic by the rebels because it is the gateway to Mr. Mobutu's village and jungle palace at Gbadolite 440 kilometres further on near the border with the Central African Republic.

"By moving to Buta and therefore knocking on the doors of Gbadolite, the rebels are challenging Mr. Mobutu's authority. The move has little or no military advantage, it is purely political," the source said.

The French Foreign Ministry said Monday that Mr. Mobutu's health was "a source of concern" in the clearest indication so far that his condition had deteriorated.

Intelligence and military officials in Zambia, which shares a land and water border with Shaba, said they had noticed a sharp decline in Zaire's defence units in the area as scared soldiers retreated ahead of the rebel advance.

The rebels say they have moved to within 400 kilometres of the Shaba's volatile capital Lubumbashi, a point confirmed by officials in Zambia.



Kisangani residents run through the streets during a march to show their support for the rebels who overran government troops three days ago. Hundreds of people participated in the march which called for President Mobutu's resignation (Reuters photo)

CIA nominee Lake withdraws

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Anthony Lake, nominated to head the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), has decided to withdraw from consideration following criticism in the Senate, and President Bill Clinton accepted the decision, CNN reported.

CNN quoted sources close to Mr. Lake saying he had decided to withdraw after becoming convinced the Republican-held Senate would hold "never-ending" hearings but in the end would not confirm him as the new head of the CIA.

Mr. Clinton "reluctantly" accepted the resignation, CNN said Monday.

The White House did not immediately comment on the report.

Mr. Lake, whom Mr. Clinton had nominated three months ago to head the embattled agency, had been expected to face a long, bruising confirmation hearing before the Senate intelligence committee.

In a letter to Mr. Clinton published Tuesday in the Washington Post daily, Mr. Lake said he was withdrawing his nomination despite having sufficient votes for confirmation to avoid "endless delay" in a "nasty and brutish" process.

Mr. Lake said he wanted to avoid more damage to the already embattled CIA and to members of the National Security Council (NSC), which he headed during Mr. Clinton's first term in office.

The grilling started March 11, with Mr. Lake defending the White House's decision to allow secret arms deliveries to Bosnia three

years ago, when he was Mr. Clinton's national security advisor.

The White House had given the green light for the deliveries in 1994 without informing Congress, the CIA or the Pentagon.

Republicans criticized the arms deliveries, saying the action violated an international arms embargo and boosted Iran's influence in the region.

Senators reportedly hold a grudge against Mr. Lake for having kept them in the dark about the transaction.

"Our decision was a tough one, but the right one," Mr. Lake said of the arms deliveries, which originated in Iran and were shipped to Bosnia via Croatia. He said that on hindsight, key members of Congress should have been informed.

Mr. Lake had also defended himself against accusations he had clung to an investment portfolio even though the White House had repeatedly told him to get rid of it to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Mr. Lake was fined \$5,000 in connection with holding on to those investments.

And Mr. Lake denied he knew anything about a campaign finance controversy that has widened a rift between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the White House.

The White House revealed last week that in 1996 the FBI had informed two NSC members of Beijing's plans to pour money into the campaigns of six members of Congress.

The White House says the

'Climate change will hit emerging nations'

BRUSSELS (R) — Any economic fallout induced by climate change will hit emerging nations hard, but will leave developed countries relatively unscathed, experts told a conference Monday.

The experts were speaking at a conference entitled The Impact of Climate Change on Business and Industry.

The United Nations' inter-governmental panel on climate change has been seeking agreement to force down the emission of so-called greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide (CO2), said to contribute to a warming of the planet.

The fight against greenhouse gases gained momentum at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro, where developed countries agreed to cut their CO2 output to 1990 levels by 2000. CO2 is thought to trap the sun's heat, raising the Earth's temperature.

The increased temperature would cause havoc with the climate. Melting polar ice would raise sea levels and submerge low lying areas. Traditional agriculture would be decimated by intolerable temperatures. Hunger and disease would wipe out millions in poor countries.

Severe storm frequency would increase inexorably.

But the science behind the theory of global warming has not been universally accepted, and many scientists draw attention to the complicated nature of the research, and the difficulty in coming to firm conclusions.

"The physics is so complex, it is still not possible to come to firm conclusions (about climate change)," said Thomas Downing, answering questions after a speech.

Mr. Downing, programme leader for the Oxford, England, based environmental change unit, said climate change was more likely to harm developing nations.

"For the world system, climate change is an unlikely threat to managed resources such as global agricultural production, but poses a significant threat to valued environments and landscapes," Mr. Downing said in a speech.

Mr. Downing said this meant the end for some low-lying areas, mainly in the third world, some sea species and coral.

And there were dangerous scenarios that couldn't be ruled out, also mainly in the developing world. Catastrophic weather spasms which now occurred once every 20 years, might recur at ever shortening time spans.

"Prospects for sustainable development in the coming decades, implies a modest potential for regional collapse, depending on surprises such as windstorms," Mr. Downing said.

"For regions sensitive to climatic variations or the major dimensions of climate change, there is a real risk to development. For vulnerable populations and livelihoods, perhaps a fifth of the world population already in crisis, adverse climate change threatens their future livelihoods," Mr. Downing said.

Richard Tol, from the Institute for Environmental Studies at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, Netherlands, agreed, but said for some, climate change could even be beneficial.

A warming climate could bring previously marginal agricultural land into arable use for the first time.

"For the former Soviet Union, for example, damage could be as low as 0.4 per cent of GDP, or even negative, climate change is potentially beneficial. Asia and Africa, on the other hand, could face extremely high damages, mainly due to severe life/morbidity impacts," Mr. Tol said in a speech.

U.S.: Work needed for NATO deal with Russia

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov held pre-summit talks with President Bill Clinton Monday but U.S. officials said a deal over NATO expansion still seemed some way off.

Mr. Primakov told reporters after the hour-long White House meeting that Russia would not change its opposition to NATO's plan to accept new members from Eastern Europe, but he signalled that Moscow wanted an accommodation.

"Russia understands that NATO is a real force, and Russia wants to have normal relations with NATO, which would serve the cause of normalising the situation in Europe," he said.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry said Mr. Primakov and Mr. Clinton had a "good review" of the issues to be addressed at the Helsinki summit on March 20-21 between Mr. Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

The NATO expansion plan, to be unveiled in Madrid in July, was expected to dominate the summit, but arms control and Moscow's desire to join international economic groupings will also be on the agenda.

To allay Moscow's concerns over the entry of its former allies into the Western alliance, NATO is offering Russia a charter that would give it the right to close consultation on European security issues but no power to veto NATO plans.

"Obviously we have not reached an agreement on the NATO-Russia charter," U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said, commenting on three rounds of talks Mr. Primakov has held since Saturday with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"There's a lot of work that needs to be done before we have a charter agreement, to say the least," he said.

Mr. McCurry told reporters: "There will likely continue to be some disagreements after the summit in Helsinki. I can't imagine that we will solve all the issues that are pending."

Mr. Primakov said both sides had put forward proposals during his Washington talks. "We compared our proposals. We worked hard. And in some cases we achieved success," he said, without elaborating.

Mr. Primakov corrected a Russian questioner who asked about the "juridical basis" that Moscow has been seeking for an agreement with NATO. The West has rejected the notion that such a deal should have the force of international law.

"I would put it more precisely in this respect," Mr. Primakov said. "What we are talking about is the binding character of the document. I have the impression that the American side understands our arguments in favour of the binding character of the document."

Mr. McCurry noted that a politically binding agreement would simply mean a commitment that the United States and its allies would carry out.

U.S. officials say there is an element of bargaining in the Russian position, with Moscow holding out for concessions in other fields in return for accepting a NATO expansion plan they know the alliance is determined to pursue.

"The Russians are going to soak this for everything they can, and we know that," one official said.

As a "sweetener" for NATO expansion, the West is offering Russia changes to the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe pact that would block an arms buildup around Russia's borders.

Of even more concern to Washington is to try to break a deadlock over nuclear arms control. The 1993 START-2 strategic arms pact is stuck in the Russian Duma (parliament), many of whose deputies fear it could hurt Russian security.

U.S. officials have spoken of preparing for a possible

START-3 accord that would go beyond the major missile cutbacks envisioned in START-2. But they say negotiations cannot start until the Duma ratifies the earlier treaty.

One carrot that the United States can offer Moscow is support for its membership in global economic groupings like the World Trade Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

On Tuesday, President Yeltsin met his foreign minister to prepare for the U.S.-Russian summit set for Thursday and Friday, the Kremlin said.

Mr. Yeltsin met with Mr. Primakov after the foreign minister's return from Washington.

"There are difficulties, but Russia and the United States will try together to overcome them," the Kremlin Press Service said following the Yeltsin-Primakov meeting.

It said that "the two sides have put forward documents" on which "work is continuing."

It added that Mr. Yeltsin had "given instructions," but provided no details.

The meeting, which lasted for one hour, took place at Mr. Yeltsin's residence at Gorki-9, west of Moscow.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin Thursday and Friday in Helsinki, Finland.

In Moscow, Mr. Yeltsin joked about Mr. Clinton's injury and signalled that the American president should be ready for tough negotiations in Helsinki. "They said that a sick Yeltsin and a healthy Clinton would come to Helsinki and it turns out the other way around," Mr. Yeltsin said in an interview with Russian, American and Finnish television reporters.

With Mr. Clinton concentrating on the summit, Vice-President Al Gore stepped in at two public events Monday to speak about campaign finance reform and to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with Irish Prime Minister John Bruton on his behalf.

Although Mr. Clinton kept a low profile in public, he met Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov Monday afternoon to discuss summit preparations.

Mr. Clinton returned to the White House Sunday and was expected to pursue a much reduced public schedule before he leaves for Helsinki Wednesday night.

Mr. Gore will fill in for him at some events.

Mr. Clinton received wishes for a speedy recovery from many foreign leaders, including Mr. Yeltsin, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and an unexpected offer of assistance from his 1996 election rival, former Republican Sen. Bob Dole.

"Dear Mr. president, should you need someone to fill in and run the country during your recovery, give me a call," Sen. Dole said in a letter made public by Mr. McCurry, who said Mr. Clinton "got a chuckle" out of it.

Injured Clinton resumes some work in wheelchair

WASHINGTON (R) — Seated in a wheelchair but dressed up in a blue suit, President Bill Clinton Monday began his first work day since knee surgery by skipping public events but keeping a date with Russia's foreign minister.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry said Mr. Clinton was not in much pain from his right knee, which was surgically repaired Friday for a torn tendon, but said his upper body was sore from a strenuous workout with physical therapists Sunday.

"The president is very vigorous and active this morning," Mr. McCurry told reporters. "His pain has really subsided."

"The knee pain is not that great today, it's really more stiffness and soreness from the workout he had yesterday," Mr. McCurry said, adding Mr. Clinton had jokingly referred to his physical therapists as "the torture team."

Mr. Clinton rushed back from Florida Friday for emergency surgery after he tore a tendon in his right knee by stumbling on some steps at the estate of Australian golfer Greg Norman.

His recuperation is expected to take months, with about eight weeks spent on crutches and possibly up to six months before he can return to his pastimes of golf and jogging. His leg is immobilized in a brace to keep it from bending.

For now, Mr. Clinton is in a wheelchair and for the most part restricting his activities to the upstairs residence of the White House, where furniture has been rearranged and carpets taped down for his convalescence.

Mr. McCurry said it was not clear whether Mr. Clinton would be on crutches by the time of his summit with

Annan begins U.N. reforms

UNITED NATIONS (R) — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan Monday proposed eliminating staff, cutting administrative costs and merging economic policy departments as the first step in his programme to reform the United Nations.

But he refrained from any drastic reductions or an across the board "slash and burn" programme some U.S. Congressmen want before they authorise the huge U.S. debt to the world body.

He said the U.N. budget of \$1.3 billion a year would be reduced by \$123 million in 1988-1999s and that 1,000 jobs his predecessor, Boutros Ghali of Egypt, left vacant would now be cut completely.

Dr. Ghali's proposal to cut the posts was rejected by the general assembly. "But I

am confident they will (approve) now because of the ground work and preparatory work we have done in moving it along," Mr. Annan told Reuters.

Ambassador Richard Butler of Australia, who has served on several U.N. reform groups, believed Mr. Annan, a Ghanaian, had served notice to the world body's third world majority that he would increase funds for development but not jobs in New York.

"He is saying the job cuts are permanent. Forget it. This is not a gravy train," Mr. Butler said.

In addition to the permanent job cuts Mr. Annan said he would cut down administrative expenditures, now 38 per cent of the budget. The estimated \$200 million savings would be

used for development projects.

And he said he would merge three departments dealing with economic and social programmes into one department, now headed by undersecretaries-general from China, India and France. Diplomats said they believed Nitin Desai of India would head the new department.

Mr. Annan also said he was revamping the department of public information but no details on how this would be done were given. Mr. Butler said Mr. Annan had recognised that the "public relations here are appalling."

The announcements by Mr. Annan were the first part of a reform programme he promised to undertake when he assumed the job on Jan. 1.



A member of a crack Chinese police unit temporarily removes a spiked wire tire-buster Tuesday in order to let a vehicle enter the Beijing neighbourhood in which the South Korean consulate is situated. A special flight believed to be carrying North Korean defector Hwang Jang-Yop on the first leg of his journey out of China arrived in the southeastern port city of Xiamen early Tuesday morning. Mr. Hwang has been in the consulate since Feb. 12 seeking refuge there (Reuters photo)

European team discusses aid with Albania president

TIRANA (R) — Albanian President Sali Berisha told a top European Union (EU) delegation his country needed food, medicine and help with its police force to put right the damage caused by more than a month of unrest.

Life in the capital Tirana, in turmoil for five days last week, returned to near-normal Monday, with shops open, public transport running and civil servants back in offices.

But a two-week-old state of emergency remained in place. Schools stayed closed, an overnight curfew was in effect, the country's main international airport stayed shut and strict controls on the press kept most newspapers from printing.

Eight publications asked for the restrictions to be lifted.

"Facing challenges to his authority from abroad and his newly-freed main rival, Mr. Berisha told the EU team Albania viewed rapid assistance as vital to restore order in what was already Europe's poorest country before the current troubles."

"We need humanitarian aid as soon as possible, mainly food and medicine to prevent further aggravation of the situation," state television quoted him as saying Monday evening.

"European police units are necessary to distribute this aid...and contribute to restoring order and rebuilding our police. Reorganising public and financial institutions in ruins would be another part of your assistance."

The European delegation, led by a top Dutch diplomat, met Prime Minister Bashkim Fino on its arrival by helicopter from Italy. Mr. Fino was appointed last week to head an all-party government which took office as part of a hard-won deal with Mr. Berisha calling for early elections in June.

The EU approved the dispatch of the delegation at a meeting last weekend in the Netherlands after ruling out Albania's call to create a peacekeeping force to help restore order.

It was also expected to visit the ports of Durres and Vlore, key bridgeheads in any relief aid operation.

State television, the most influential medium in the Balkan country, has failed to show Mr. Berisha since last Friday and has focused its attention on Mr. Fino's government.

Before the coalition deal, Mr. Berisha had

refused to consider working with the opposition Socialists, successors to the Communist Party which ran Europe's most repressive regime for 45 years. He now says he will step down if his own right-wing Democratic Party, in power since 1992, loses the June election.

Rebels who control southern cities say they will down arms only if Mr. Berisha steps down. The revolt in the south, in protest initially against the collapse of dubious savings schemes, grew into a country-wide uprising against authority, with crowds rampaging through towns with arms stolen from army stores.

Italian Coast Guards rescued more than 800 Albanians from a stricken ship Monday as refugees from the unrest continued to flee across Adriatic to Italy. The total of Albanians in Italy trying to escape the chaos climbed to over 6,000.

State television showed footage of doctors working 72 hours without a break in Tirana's city hospital. It quoted officials as saying eight people had died, putting at 28 the city's overall toll. More than 100 died throughout the country.

Television footage showed elderly women weeping as thousands of arms were being handed in at collection points.

It also interviewed academics at Tirana's Agriculture College pleading with rioters to return equipment stolen when they ransacked lecture halls and laboratories there last week.

Prices of staples had risen sharply, it said, putting many goods beyond the budgets of Albanians earning the average monthly wage equivalent to \$80 or less.

Mr. Berisha's main opponent Fatos Nano, released from prison last week and like the prime minister a Socialist, called on Mr. Berisha to stop interfering in the work of the government and devote his efforts to restoring order.

But unlike the southern rebels, Mr. Nano did not see Mr. Berisha's resignation as a priority. He told reporters his message was that the president should "cooperate, not interfere."

"Since the majority of protesters continue to demand his resignation it means he hasn't got the message," he said. "I would prefer to shake hands with him as an Albanian citizen and not as president."

50 killed in Russia plane crash

MOSCOW (AFP) — A Russian airliner carrying 50 people crashed Tuesday in the North Caucasus, and all those aboard are feared dead, Russian officials said.

The plane may have exploded in mid-air, Interfax News Agency said, quoting local authorities, who also said that rescue workers had so far recovered 17 bodies from the wreckage.

The Antonov-24 plane was flying from Stavropol in southern Russia to Trabzon, a Turkish city on the Black Sea, when the crash occurred, the Ministry for Emergency Situations said.

The plane, which belonged to a company based in Stavropol, went down near the town of Cherkessk, about 90 kilometres south of Stavropol, a ministry spokesman said.

It disappeared from radar screens at about 10:12 a.m. (0712 GMT) and rescue services were at the site within 40 minutes, according to the deputy interior minister of the Karachai-Cherkessia Republic in

which the accident occurred.

The plane was carrying 41 passengers, an eight-member crew and one director from the company itself, the airline which owned the plane said.

The Emergency Situations Ministry had said earlier that there were 48 people on board the doomed plane.

The ministry said all those on board were presumed to have died in the crash.

Neither the ministry nor the airline company specified the nationality of the victims.

The Karachai-Cherkessia Interior Ministry said that preliminary investigations suggested the plane may have exploded in mid air, with debris scattered across a three-kilometre radius.

A special team from Russia's state Civil Aviation Committee was due to leave Moscow for Cherkessk later in the afternoon to take part in the investigation, a spokesman for the committee told Interfax.

The plane had been hired for a charter flight. Many Russians travel regularly to Turkey to buy goods, mainly clothing, that they re-sell back home.

The accident was the first major air crash to hit Russia this year.

In 1996, 14 civilian plane crashes were reported across the country with a total of 219 victims, the Civil Aviation Committee spokesman said.

The spokesman said that air safety in Russia had plunged in the last few years, particularly because of an increase in charter flights.

Aeroflot, the national airline, broke up in 1992 and its domestic service was split between several hundred regional companies.

The Antonov 24 is a small Soviet-designed twin-engine propeller plane with around 30 seats. Production of the model was halted in 1978.

U.N.: North Korea could run out of food by end of March

BEIJING (AFP) — The head of the U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP) said Tuesday that North Korea's people are just weeks away from possible starvation.

"The immediate future is not good," WFP Executive Director Catherine Bertini told reporters here after a four-day visit to the famine-ravaged country, adding people were just weeks away from "running out of enough food to feed themselves."

"The government itself estimates that by the end of March or (early) April, they will run out of food that they distribute to their people."

She said the average individual was receiving 100 grammes, or about 350 calories, of rice per day. The U.N.'s minimum daily level for refugee maintenance is five times that amount.

"Immediate assistance is absolutely crucial on the part of the international community to stave off malnutrition and possible starvation," she said.

Ms. Bertini said North Korea faces a food shortfall of some 1.3 million tonnes this year, adding that it would be "almost impossible" for the country to obtain the amount through donations and other means.

Ms. Bertini reported visiting severely malnourished children and homes where people were supplementing their diet with roots and leaves during her visit, mainly to southern areas where WFP programmes are active.

Officials indicated that conditions were much worse in the northern part of the country, where consumption of tree bark was causing intestinal problems and bleeding, Ms. Bertini said.

She said she had heard no reports of death by starvation so far, however.

The WFP had in the last four weeks received pledges covering 45 per cent of its most recent appeal for aid for North Korea — \$41.6 million in total costs including 100,000 tonnes of cereals — she said.

After completing the fact-finding mission, however, she said the WFP must step up its food aid programme and, in particular, its aid to North Korean children under the age of six.

The current appeal includes 20,000 tonnes of food specifically targeted at children, she said.

North Korean defector finds haven in Philippines

MANILA (R) — In an operation shrouded in secrecy, the highest North Korean official to flee the Stalinist state fled into the Philippines Tuesday to seek temporary haven, military officials said.

The officials said Hwang Jang-Yop, Pyongyang's top ideologue who had been marooned in Seoul's Beijing mission for nearly five weeks after seeking asylum on Feb. 12, arrived at the former U.S. Clark Airbase near Manila.

He then boarded a military helicopter bound for Baguio city, 200 kilometres north of Manila, said the senior officers, who asked not to be identified.

The cloak-and-dagger nature of his flight, which could have come out of the pages of a cold war spy novel, lingered for hours after his reported arrival in the Philippines.

There was no official confirmation that Mr. Hwang, accompanied by at least three other people, had arrived in Baguio.

An official of the South Korean embassy said the embassy had no information.

Philippine President Fidel Ramos also said he had no information on the matter. He added that he was asking the department of foreign affairs to verify the report.

"No, I have not received a report to that effect," Mr. Ramos told reporters when asked about Mr. Hwang. "In any case, I will verify that

and later on whatever be the result, we will have the Department of Foreign Affairs issue a statement."

Foreign Undersecretary Rodolfo Severino, who cancelled a news briefing, said: "I am waiting for orders."

The Chinese and South Korean governments both confirmed that Mr. Hwang had left China but refused to say where he was taken.

"What I can tell you is that through consultations among all sides, the problem has already basically been solved," Foreign Ministry spokesman Cui Tian-kai told a news briefing in Beijing.

The official Xinhua News Agency said Mr. Hwang had left China of his own free will after sheltering in Seoul's mission in Beijing since mid-February and had gone to an unspecified third country.

"China, proceeding from safeguarding the peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, according to Mr. Hwang's own will and considering the positions taken by the parties concerned, has sent Mr. Hwang out of China's territory for a third country," Xinhua said.

Unmarked vehicles were used Monday night to slip Mr. Hwang past reporters waiting outside the tight police cordon around Seoul's consular compound in Beijing's tree-lined diplomatic quarter. Japan's Fuji Television reported.

Mr. Hwang spent the night at the military airport

on the outskirts of Beijing before being flown out of the Chinese capital to the southeastern Chinese port of Xiamen. There he boarded a chartered Air China plane to Clark.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman in Seoul said Mr. Hwang was now "in a secure and safe place" with the cooperation of "a third country." Without elaborating, the spokesman said: "He's under our control."

North Korea at first accused Seoul of kidnapping the scholarly Hwang and sent scores of diplomats and students to keep vigil around Seoul's Beijing mission. But the Stalinist hermit nation later appeared to ease its stance on the crisis.

On Tuesday, Pyongyang was silent about Mr. Hwang's movements.

"There has been no response from North Korea," said Lee Kyu-Hyung, the Seoul ministry spokesman. "Hwang Jang-Yop himself wanted to defect, and the arrangements were made after negotiations with China so I hope no new tensions will develop between South and North Korea."

Mr. Hwang's defection muddled ties between China and the two Koreas, bitter rivals since the 1950-1953 Korean War, and forced Beijing to choose between a new capitalist friend in the South and an old Communist ally in the North.

Although there was no official statement from Manila, at least three senior

Philippine military officers confirmed Mr. Hwang arrived at Clark Air Base, 80 kilometres north of Manila, on board a chartered Air China Boeing 737 jet from Xiamen.

Two Philippine officers who received Mr. Hwang and his companions said the group had snacks and stayed at the Clark terminal building for about half an hour before two helicopters whisked them away, accompanied by South Korean diplomats and security and Philippine intelligence officers.

A Filipino general told Reuters that one week before Mr. Hwang arrived, intelligence officers assigned to secure him were told they were supposed to guard an important "foreign investor."

It was only Monday that they were informed about the identity of the "investor," the general said.

A military source earlier said the helicopters carrying Mr. Hwang's party were bound for Manila but checks failed to confirm this.

A pilot of one of the helicopters which arrived at Baguio from Clark, Lt. Resie Manso, told Reuters his passengers were "Chinese looking" but he did not know who they were.

Several vehicles whisked the passengers away on arrival at Baguio Airport, he said.

Yeltsin places reform hopes in new young team

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's new young team of reformist ministers Tuesday sets about the daunting task of lifting the country from economic depression, while a series of other cabinet officials await news on their fate.

In what may be the last great effort to restart reform during his presidency, Boris Yeltsin appointed Boris Nemtsov, 37, a leading regional pro-reform governor, as first deputy prime minister Monday. Several other reformers were elevated to rank of deputy prime minister.

"In the economic sector of the government the reformists have definitely won," said Sergei Markov, analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Think Tank. "Everything to do with the economy will be concentrated in the hands of reformers."

Mr. Nemtsov joins Anatoly Chubais, 41, the father of Russia's massive post-Soviet privatisation programme, as first deputy prime minister under Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, 58.

Mr. Nemtsov, a media celebrity who Mr. Yeltsin says is presidential material, will spearhead social reforms such as welfare.

"I will not tell lies. I will not take bribes or steal. I will explain to people everything I do, even the most unpleasant things," Mr. Nemtsov, 37, governor of Nizhny Novgorod region, told reporters.

Mr. Chubais, who will also have the title of finance minister, will oversee the economy.

"Two young men — you and Anatoly Chubais — create a fresh young team in the government — from scratch," Mr. Yeltsin, 66, told Mr. Nemtsov.

To widen the regional base of the cabinet Mr. Yeltsin elevated the mayor of the industrial city of Samara, Oleg Syushev, to deputy prime minister. Joining him were liberal Deputy Economy Minister Yakov Urinov, who will also serve as

Several Russian generals to be sacked — Rodionov

MOSCOW (AFP) — A number of Russian armed forces generals are likely to be dismissed soon for corruption, Defence Minister Igor Rodionov said here Tuesday, without naming any of those concerned.

"It's a question of some generals who don't conform to their rank, who are engaged in business incompatible with their official duties," Mr. Rodionov said, adding that he had discussed the matter with President Boris Yeltsin Monday.

Mr. Rodionov said Mr. Yeltsin had told him to "act firmly, but in accordance with the law."

Mr. Rodionov told reporters he would try "not to punish an innocent man" but "when there are facts, an official investigation has been conducted, and those facts on the table before myself and the president, a decision can be taken about one person or another." In December Mr. Yeltsin sacked the commander of the Russian army, General Vladimir Semioov, although the decision was not confirmed by a presidential decree.

The Defence Ministry said Gen. Semioov had been sacked for "activities incompatible with his function that reflect on the honour and dignity of a member of the armed forces."

Last week Mr. Rodionov announced an inquiry into the illegal delivery of 84 Russian T-72 army tanks and 50 infantry fighting vehicles to Armenia in 1994-1996.

Mr. Rodionov said a Defence Ministry commission had established that the arms were "transferred to Armenia for free and without corresponding Russian government decisions."

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But it remained uncertain if he has the personal and political strength to stay the course of reform.

"This is again the very Yeltsin who decisively began reforms in Russia," Alexander Livshits, who was demoted from deputy prime minister, told Interfax.

Throughout his presidency, Mr. Yeltsin has vacillated between bursts of energetic reform and mysterious absences from the scene as policy meandered. Twice during his presidency fresh efforts at reform have faltered.

After the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Mr. Yeltsin did not act promptly against the Soviet-era parliament, which helped stall his reforms for the next two years.

After he used military force to dissolve that parliament in 1993 and rewrite the constitution, he then faced a new generation of nationalist and pro-Communist opponents.

Even as Mr. Yeltsin has signaled sweeping economic changes in government in recent days, he has not moved to alter foreign or internal security policy.

Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov stays on as deputy prime minister. Interfax news agency reported that Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and Defence Minister Igor Rodionov, as well as the heads of the KGB's domestic and international successor agencies, would retain their posts.

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Major urges British to avoid 'untested Blair'

LONDON (R) — Prime Minister John Major urged Britain not to "take a leap in the dark" with Labour's Tony Blair in May 1 elections — but the country's top tabloid newspaper promptly backed the opposition leader.

Mr. Major, speaking hours after calling the election, was confirmed as the opinion poll underdog in his bid to give the Conservatives their fifth win in a row.

The tabloid, owned by Australian-born Rupert Murdoch, backed Mr. Major in the 1992 election when he pulled off a surprise victory. The party that emerged from the victory was divided over Britain's role in Europe and dogged by scandals.

But Mr. Major, a feisty campaigner who swiftly took to his trademark soapbox Monday to woo voters after announcing the date of the election, was given the

wholehearted support of his predecessor Margaret Thatcher, who had long sniped at him.

Lady Thatcher, ousted by her own party in 1990 as an election liability, told reporters outside her London office: "Stay with us and with John Major until we cross the finishing line."

It could well turn into a American-style presidential campaign with the personalities of the two leaders and not their politics under the microscope.

Mr. Major, hoping a buoyant economy will bring back the votes, is derided by critics as a grey figure with no charisma. Conservatives trumpet the virtues of "honest John" with his man-of-the-people integrity and ability to thrive under pressure.

Critics mock Mr. Blair as "phony Tony," the telegenic centrist who deals only in soundbites. But he has dropped much of the party's socialist dogma in his bid to win business and the much needed middle-class voter over to the cause of new Labour.

Mr. Major was derided at the last election for clambering onto his trusty soapbox to deliver his message to voters.

But he clearly hopes lightning will strike twice, shouting above hecklers: "I have no intention of being deterred by stunt demonstrations with stunt demonstrators who have no policies."

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No accommodation in settlement

BETWEEN WHAT Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is doing and saying about his new housing project in East Jerusalem lies a contradiction that cannot be covered by deceptive talking and misrepresentation of reality.

What Mr. Netanyahu has begun to do is build a new settlement in Arab Jerusalem despite the danger this action poses for the peace process and the aspirations for building a new Middle East in which justice and understanding prevail. But to the insult of human intelligence, the Israeli prime minister is selling his plan as a concrete step to meet the accommodation needs of both Israelis and Palestinians. This simply will not sell. The facts belie the preaching. As His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan aptly pointed out in Gaza on Monday, there is a huge difference between politically motivated settlement activities and housing plans designed to fulfill a basic human need for decent accommodation.

Settlement activity is aimed at serving Israel's political objective of changing the facts on the ground in a bid to impose a new status quo that can facilitate the Jewish state's claim over East Jerusalem and other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. That is a recipe for conflict, a blow to efforts to ensure inter-communal existence between Israelis on the one hand, and the Palestinians and the Arab World, on the other.

Housing projects to meet the needs of the two communities inhabiting the Holy City need much more than what Mr. Netanyahu is offering. They, as Prince Hassan said, have to be agreed upon by representatives of the two communities and the transparency required to win them the credibility with which we can build confidence between the Arabs and the Israelis.

The fact is that while Israelis have been allowed to build with up to 300 per cent density in Jerusalem, Palestinians have been restricted to 25 per cent. Israelis' housing needs and political aspirations were served by numerous settlements in and around Jerusalem. But there were no building projects for Palestinians in Jerusalem since the city was occupied in 1967. Palestinians need over 35,000 units in the city. What the Israeli government is offering is an insignificant fragment of that. Mr. Netanyahu's claim that the new settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim is to cater for Palestinians too is a thin and useless cover to his dangerous and provocative plans. In addition to highlighting the illegality of the Israeli plans, the Palestinians can capitalise on international positive sentiment in an effective manner by making the facts about their needs well-known.

The critical stage through which the peace process is currently passing requires innovative and creative approaches to very serious problems. In this context, political and legal considerations should not cancel out human considerations. The necessity of keeping in mind the human aspect to any problem cannot be overemphasised. What Jordan has done in this regard can be a source of inspiration for all.

Over and above its political dimension, His Majesty King Hussein's visit to Israel on Sunday reverberated with a human message that has admittedly brightened the soul spirit of the day. In his statements and conversations with the bereaved Israeli families, the King was moved by human considerations that weigh heavily on him as a human being, as a father and as a brother. That humanity won the day, as most people are willing to testify.

It was within this framework that Prince Hassan took the risk of being at the site of the sad shooting incident in Baqoura immediately after it happened. And his presence at the scene undoubtedly played a major role in containing it.

Obsession with politics should not be at the expense of our humanity. Those who believe in the power of sound bites should realise that human gestures — like those of the King and his Crown Prince as well as the Jordanians who rushed to donate blood to save the victims of the Baqoura shooting — can go a long way in solving problems and averting bigger tragedies.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

WRITER DOR AL RA'i Tuesday demanded that the Jordanian soldier who shot and killed the Israeli schoolgirls be tried before a highly respected judicial authority and undergo medical examination to determine if he is mentally deranged. Faded Faneel said perhaps this man proves to be sick and therefore he should be sent to hospital for treatment rather than a prison for punishment. The Jordanian public will be waiting for the results of the investigations so as to find out if the man was sick or not or if he had political or other motivations for his act and will be frustrated if the investigation took more than two more days, said the writer. One has to remember, said the writer, that the man appointed to supervise the investigations process, Mohammad Rasoul Kilani, is not a member of the judicial authority and his work could last for a long time. He demanded that a military prosecutor general be appointed and given the mandate to deal with this case so that the soldier have all his rights secured. The writer said one should not forget that all the Israeli soldiers who committed crimes against Palestinian civilians escaped punishment or were declared to be mentally deranged so that they would not face prison terms.

The Washington Watch

Where does the peace process stand?

RECENT ACTIONS by the Netanyahu government and the U.S. veto of the United Nations Security Council resolution on Israel's planned settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim have dramatically shaken up the Middle East peace equation.

Israeli Premier's penchant for taking one step forward (only when he is forced to do so) and then two steps back has pushed the Israeli-Palestinian track to the brink.

Whether Netanyahu is a captive of his far right coalition or his leader is now an academic question. The decision to build a new settlement and new roads completing the alienation of Jerusalem and its surrounding villages from the rest of the West Bank has precipitated a crisis that may spell the end of the Oslo process.

Unilateral Israeli actions that predetermine three of the four final status issues (Jerusalem, settlements and borders) violate the very logic of the Oslo agreement, Israelis argue that their interpretations of the accord allow such behaviour. But the spirit of mutual trust and reciprocity that were the underpinnings of the agreement are contradicted by unilateral impositions by force.

Netanyahu's concepts of peace, the process needed to achieve it and its final outcome stand in stark contrast to those shared by his peace partners.

Peace, for the Israeli prime minister, appears to mean Arab acceptance of Israeli sovereignty over the entire "land of Israel."

According to the tenets of revisionist Zionism as taught by Jabotinsky, a school of thought to which Netanyahu adheres, there is room for a minority people to live under Israeli sovereignty. But there is no room for Palestinian sovereignty in Eretz Israel. And peace is only possible when Arabs accept this view.

It appears that, for Netanyahu, the peace

process is a means to accomplish this end. Within this process, tactical steps can be taken to pacify either the Palestinians, the surrounding Arab states or the international community. But these steps must never relinquish final control or create "facts" which place limits on Israeli sovereignty.

In this context, it is useful to consider the map of the final settlement of the West Bank and Gaza that is the working document for the Netanyahu government. Submitted by the Israeli military command and accepted by the prime minister, it is virtually identical to what was termed the "Drobbie's Plan" proposed by the World Zionist Organisation and accepted by the Begin-led Likud government in the late 1970s. This plan envisioned a West Bank cut into pieces by Israeli-controlled roads connecting Israeli settlements that resulted in corralling Palestinian cities and populated areas into cantons separated one from another. In this way, the Drobbie's Plan sought to ensure that there would be no possibility for the Palestinians to establish any territorial continuity in the West Bank. Thus, despite the fact that Palestinians would have self-rule within each canton, they would remain a captive minority under Israeli sovereignty.

It is in this context that Netanyahu's most recent actions can best be understood.

The Likud land strategy

Palestinians have been given control over part of Hebron and offered control over small areas of land where there are high concentrations of Palestinians in villages and small towns. At the same time, the Israeli government has moved forward in building and expanding settlements and new roads and confiscating more Palestinian-owned lands throughout

the West Bank.

Refusal to accept any sign of Palestinian independence

Israeli officials in the U.S. and in Israel have been sharply critical of U.S. efforts to extend support to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). As examples the Israeli ambassador to Washington's recent criticism of the establishment of a joint U.S.-Palestinian Commission and Israel's foreign minister's rebuke of the U.S. decision to participate in a PNA-convened conference in Gaza could be mentioned.

There was a telling comment in Netanyahu's response to King Hussein's letter when he said: "We cannot make the Jordanian-Israeli relationship hostage to the Palestinian-Israeli negotiating track. We cannot give every Palestinian-Israeli impose the power to hurt our own relationship." In other words, "we, the Israelis are sovereign here if you want peace with us, our actions in Eretz Israel should not affect your attitude towards us."

Despite continued hopes of some of the U.S. and Israeli press corps that the government of Israel's behaviour can be altered, Arabs have become convinced that Netanyahu is, in fact, ideologically driven and that his tactics and his overall strategy do not fit the Oslo framework. The notion that Palestinians should accept what is given and not complain is inimical to a peace process based on negotiated grounds in mutual respect and mutual reciprocity.

From its inception, the peace process was plagued by a number of weaknesses:

- The asymmetry of power between Israel and the Palestinians, and the absence of any real Palestinian leverage in negotiations.
- The fact that the political debate in Israel was

driven by the far right — Labour, too, often took one step forward and two steps back in order to placate the far right.

— The refusal of the U.S. to insert itself aggressively as a balancing agent either between the Israelis and the Palestinians or within the internal Israeli political debate.

Despite recent U.S. efforts to provide assistance and recognition to the PNA, there is legitimate fury in the Arab World over the U.S. veto in the Security Council. It is not that a Security Council resolution would have altered Netanyahu's decision on Abu Ghneim, but the veto is viewed as an indication of the refusal of the U.S. to insist that Israel modify its aggressive and unilateral behaviour.

This is not a new story. There is an accumulation of rage in the Arab World on the settlement issue. It is correct to note that the American language towards Israeli settlement building has changed from "illegal" to "unfortunate." And that settlement building and the billions of dollars in U.S. assistance to Israel have continued unabated. But even when the U.S. said they were illegal, back in the 1970s, settlements were still being built and the U.S. continued to provide assistance and support.

In a real sense, Israeli disrespect for world opinion and the knowledge that its violations will go unchecked is the result of accumulated experience.

Despite these weaknesses and failures in the process and relationships of the parties within the process, it is still possible to point to some positive developments that may be emerging in this current crisis.

— Israeli behaviour has not gone unnoted internationally. The Netanyahu government's actions have cost it significant political capital.

— There is significant resolve on the Arab front.

By Dr. James Zogby

King Hussein and President Mubarak's recent statements will have a significant impact on the internal Israeli debate. Despite the recent tragic murders of Israeli schoolgirls, Jordan and its King retain substantial political capital in Israel.

— Despite its veto, the U.S. indicated its displeasure on a number of occasions with the Israeli settlement effort — in private the U.S. was even more insistent.

The U.S. also spoke out against the Israeli desire to close Palestinian offices in East Jerusalem (the order has been cancelled) and has commented on the inadequate transfer of land to the Palestinians in the first of the phased redeployments.

At the same time the creation of a U.S.-Palestinian commission and the U.S. decision to attend the Gaza conference despite Israeli criticism is also noteworthy.

— Despite an organised effort by the U.S.-Jewish leadership to support Netanyahu, there are strong indications that the support is lukewarm and does not reflect the majority Jewish American attitudes.

— Finally, the actions of PNA President Yasser Arafat have been tactically flawless. A Washington political commentator recently noted: "For someone who does not have any cards to hold, Arafat is playing a great hand."

Arafat knows that by saying "no" and playing a bit of brinkmanship he can test the commitment of the international community to the peace process.

All these developments are occurring while the process and the region teeter on the brink of renewed conflict.

The question that remains to be answered is: Will Netanyahu feel the heat and back away or will the pull of ideology or his coalition be so strong that he breaks ground at Jabal Abu Ghneim and pushes the region into the abyss?

'The closeness in this time of sorrow will contribute to improving Jordanian-Israeli relations'

The following excerpts from the Hebrew press editorials tackle His Majesty King Hussein's March 16 visit to Israel:

"Yediot Ahronot" writes that "the visit of King Hussein was an emotional experience even for those who do not get ecstatic over the appearance of the crown on the bow of the Royal aeroplane." The King's gesture was so heart warming that "Israelis were willing to forget that it was a soldier of his who perpetrated the murder. With one brush of the hand, the King restored his reputation with us, which was hurt by the... letter he sent to Prime Minister Netanyahu last week. With this gesture, it was said, he erased the past."

"Yediot Ahronot," in its second editorial, speculates on whether King Hussein's visit was part of a broader political deal in the area. The editors believe that we have only to wait patiently until such a deal is revealed.

"Ma'ariv" writes that "the picture of King Hussein kneeling before the maimers of the daughter murdered by a Jordanian soldier will not be soon erased from our collective memories. The visit yesterday created a special bond with King Hussein, the scope of which has not been felt by the Israeli public towards any Arab leader since the late President Sadat visited Jerusalem." The paper adds that "the peace between Israel and Jordan, between Jews and Arabs, is

a tangible connection that penetrates into the personal realm. There is an educational value to creating a human atmosphere as such, and it is a shame that its price is so high."

"Ha'aretz" says that King Hussein's visit is "more than just a gesture by the Hashemite Royal Family. During his visit, the King showed his identification with the pain of the bereaved families. Their pain, he stressed, was also a personal pain for him. And the things he said were heartfelt, and you could feel the personal pain of the King." Regarding the political and diplomatic process, the editors write "that it can only be hoped that the closeness that was registered in this time of sorrow will contribute its part in improving relations between the two countries."

"Ma'ariv," in its second editorial, claims that King Hussein's visit was "also meant to prevent an escalation of the crisis between Israel and the Palestinians." The editors state that "unlike the decision on the opening of the tunnel, whose ramifications were not taken into account, there is here (the government's latest decision on Har Homa) a cold calculated risk. The message of Netanyahu and his ministers is that they are not prepared to be dictated to — by neither friends nor enemies — beyond what is said in the Oslo agreement. And construction was not prohibited by the agreement. There is much justice in the government's

decision, but little reason." The editors conclude that Netanyahu may come out of this stronger but "if Palestinian resistance gets out of hand, Netanyahu and his ministers will carry a heavy responsibility for the disruption, and perhaps even the termination, of the peace process."

"Ha'aretz" in its editorial calls for the condemnation of Justice Minister Hanegbi's comments about Yasser Arafat, saying that they are "crude threats" and that they are a matter of "grave concern" because he said them and because "the prime minister did not immediately censure Hanegbi for making such statements." The editors state that the prime minister's silence on this issue "clearly indicates that the present government still remains outside the emotional and ideological processes involved in the transition from a state of war to one of peace."

The editors also criticise Hanegbi's attack on Arafat saying that he "displayed the spirit of a bully, he seems to lack political common sense; the entire world heard him warn Arafat that the Palestinian leader would meet the same fate as the 'engineer,' the late Yehiyah Ayash. Similarly, the entire world heard the justice minister include Arafat's wife in his warnings..."

Unfortunately, Hanegbi has apparently forgotten that he is no longer a rash-minded student leader but rather a senior cabinet minister in the Israeli government.

LETTERS

Big and small people

To the Editor:

I AM sure that no one on the "other" side would have given a thought to coming over to express compassion and sympathy to bereaved people in any incident similar to that of Baqoura.

Vision and courage are unique qualities of leadership in our Middle East, qualities that His Majesty King Hussein has manifested on so many occasions.

Omar Abbass,
Amman.

True son of Abraham

To the Editor:

GOD BLESS King Hussein! If anyone in the Holy Land truly shows that he cares for peace and justice for the peoples of Abraham, it is that saint of a man. I have never seen any leader, with the possible exception of Pope John Paul II, show such graciousness in light of a tragedy of that magnitude. To those who feel that his letter provoked this maudlin act, I say that King Hussein, like the prophet Jeremiah, only pointed out the logical consequences of consistent acts of injustice on the part of the Israelis against the Palestinian and Arab peoples.

I am an American, and a Catholic, so my knowledge of Islam is limited and often filled with the misconceptions so prevalent in the West, but I have rarely seen such a genuine display of repentance and humility as I saw from King Hussein on CNN. He could teach many of our political leaders in Christendom a thing or two about courage and statesmanship.

Christopher Davis
Carrollton, Texas,
U.S.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

IT OCCURRED TO ME

Moribund morality?

By Ali Kassay

I WAS fascinated to read, two days ago, about the debate that took place in Egypt on cloning (Egypt's top cleric rules cloning is the work of devil, according to a Jordan Times article on March 17, 1997). First of all, I believe that we should raise our hats to our Egyptian brothers for having the courage to address such a delicate issue, thereby setting another lead which other Arabs will follow only reluctantly and after a good deal of time.

But this is not the main point that attracted my attention. What I found fascinating was the position adopted by Grand Mufti Nasr Farid Wasseil. According to the article, the venerable mufti started by dismissing cloning as an act forbidden by holy scriptures since it aims at changing God's creation, and as the work of the devil who is, behind all corruption. Therefore, he concluded: "This issue is taboo, but not if it deals with aspects that can help humanity, as in cloning an organ such as a liver or a kidney to solve a problem... and not weaken a healthy person."

Now this is fascinating. Taking the last part of the statement, the sagacious sheikh appears to be saying that cloning can have good applications as well as bad ones, and that morality and the common good dictate that this scientific breakthrough should be used solely for the benefit of man.

This is most reasonable and fair. In fact, it can be said not only of genetic engineering, but of technology as a whole. A rudimentary item, such as a ladder, can be used to save children from a burning house, but then again it can be used by a burglar to gain entry into a house. But the ladder is not the work of the devil. The one that I keep in my house, for instance, was the workmanship of Abu Mohammad the carpenter, not Mephistopheles, unless he has fooled me completely. So really, why bring the devil into the matter?

Other questions present themselves around the learned sheikh's judgement. For instance, when a scientist embarks on a course of research, how can he, without divine inspiration, foresee all the applications to which his findings can be put? In Sheikh Wasseil's lexicon, how can a scientist tell in advance if the principles that he is exploring are inspired by Benevolence or Boozebub? Moreover, if the topic is taboo, how can scientists research it to produce cloned kidneys to replace defective organs?

In fact, wouldn't it have been more reasonable of the sheikh to acknowledge modestly that he, like the rest of us, is confused and somewhat afraid since we are faced with new and perplexing questions for which there is no ready answer? To address these questions we may try looking forward not back.

Theologians faced the same dilemma in Renaissance Europe, and they reacted in somewhat the same manner as Sheikh Wasseil. As a result, Europeans were forced to separate science from religion, with mixed results. Now we come once again to a point where we seek moral input to guide scientific progress. If the best that our theologians can do is the search in the attic of ancient history for a precedent, in the confines of which they would try in vain to squeeze the problem, then they will only succeed in marginalising themselves, thus depriving us of valuable moral guidance.

Scientists would shrug their shoulders as Galileo did when he was forced to recant on his theory that the earth moves around the sun in order to avoid an uncomfortable death by torture, and mutter under their breath: "And yet it does move."



Two Israeli soldiers prepare their machine-gun on Jabal Abu Ghneim, where hundreds of Israeli soldiers are deployed at the planned site of a new Jewish settlement, in Arab East Jerusalem. The Israeli army has



closed the zone to prevent Palestinian demonstrations, and (right) Israeli surveyors take measurements at the site (Reuters and AFP photos)

U.S. 'concerned' over settlement; U.K. assails Israeli move and Russia urges resumption of talks

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Tuesday repeated her concern over Israel's decision to press ahead with construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

"I think the Israeli understand the difficulties that we see with their going forward" with the construction of the so-called Har Homa project on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem.

"We had wished that the Har Homa decision had not gone forward," she said.

In reference to the potential for a violent reaction from Palestinians to the new Jewish enclave, Ms. Albright said: "Violence is never an answer to the problems in the Middle East."

"We would very much want to see a return to the table."

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Washington's Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross was

the only U.S. official in contact with Israelis and Palestinians over the past few days.

"We are calling on the extremists on both sides to refrain from violence," he said, adding that he had "no idea when the negotiations will resume."

"It may take a lot of work to convince them," Mr. Burns said.

Britain's foreign minister used unusually tough language to condemn the Israeli move, reflecting the level of international anger at the move.

"The start of construction at Har Homa outside Jerusalem can do nothing but harm the peace process," Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said. "Like all settlements, this one will be illegal."

Mr. Rifkind called on the Palestinian leadership to continue to do everything possible to avoid current tensions leading to violence, but eschewed his government's usual diplomatic tendency to urge both sides to maintain

commitment to the peace process. His criticism was aimed squarely at Israel.

"I am disappointed that the Israeli government have taken this decision against the strong advice of their friends in the international community," he said.

"We are now at a crossroads in the peace process," Mr. Rifkind said. "If we are to continue on the road to peace, progress must be restored through the urgent resumption of dialogue and negotiation."

The Russian government, an official co-sponsor of the Middle East peace process, "insistently recommended" to Israel that it cancel its plan, Itar-Tass reported.

The Russian news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying that Russia believes all sides should honour their commitments, notably concerning resumption of negotiations on the final status of territories.

"We have consistently pursued this line in our contacts

with Palestinian leaders and the Israeli government, which we insistently recommend should re-examine its decision to build a colony in East Jerusalem," he said.

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi strongly condemned Israel's construction of the Jewish settlement as the worst possible decision.

"The decision of building new housing projects in East Jerusalem is really the worst decision that could be taken," Mr. Prodi said at the end of a one-day visit to Beirut.

"I expressed my worry to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. We have to do something for the peace process otherwise peace will go far away," he said in a joint press conference with his Lebanese counterpart Rafik Hariri.

Mr. Hariri accused Mr. Netanyahu of "making peace very difficult. He is doing everything to make the peace process very difficult to restart and to take off."

Turkey closes illegal schools

ANKARA (AP) — Starting to carry out directives by the military, which is concerned about Islamic movements, Turkey's Islamic-led government has begun shutting down unauthorised Koran courses.

Three establishments providing the study courses in the capital were put under lock on Monday, the Ankara governor's office said.

"Others will be closed as soon as they are detected," Governor Erdogan Sahioglu was quoted in daily Milliyet as saying.

Last month, the national security council, which includes five top generals and President Suleyman Demirel, issued several directives to the government to fight what it saw as a threat from radical movements.

Some 6,500 Koran courses are run by the government's directorate of religious affairs around the country, but it is not clear how many illegally operated ones exist.

Defence teams many

(Continued from page 11)

Islamic Action Front (IAF) party, another opponent of Jordanian-Israeli normalisation, announced it had formed a 13-member team of lawyers headed by Zuhair Abul Ragheb to defend Dakamseh.

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) said it had also set up a 15-strong defence team for Dakamseh. The team is headed by Najib Rashdan, a former member of the Upper House of Parliament.

Another team of lawyers was being planned by other political parties which sympathise with Dakamseh, party sources said.

But the JBA, citing its role as the umbrella body for all lawyers in Jordan, asserted that no other organisation than itself had the right to defend Dakamseh.

"Our legal committee will include the different political spectrum from the right to the left," Mr. Kherfan said, adding that the JBA had been authorised by the Professional Associations Union and different political parties in Sunday's meeting to form a defence team.

But Mr. Abul Ragheb said all teams, including the JBA committee, will coordinate to provide Dakamseh with the best possible defence.

"In accordance with the Jordanian law, the committees will elect one lawyer to represent Mr. Dakamseh in court," said Mr. Abul Ragheb.

He added that members of the committee can take part in the trial, "if one feels that a point has not been covered."

Analysts assert that the defence teams were more

of an expression of political support for Dakamseh rather than committees representing a legal defence in a court of law.

"The message is clear: The political parties and professional associations are identifying with his anti-Israeli frustration. The team do not represent a legal defence for a crime committed," said an analyst, who asked not to be identified.

Mr. Kherfan said that more than 200 lawyers have volunteered to defend Dakamseh but only 40 lawyers will be involved in the defence.

An AOHR statement said that the aim of its committee was to guarantee "the right of the Jordanian soldier ... to a fair investigation and fair trial in accordance with the law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international charter and declarations which Jordan is a signatory."

A group of activists led by the JBA on Monday went to meet the family of Dakamseh in Eder in the north. But they were prevented by 50 police officers from paying the solidarity visit for security reasons. Mr. Kherfan told the Jordan Times.

The group of around 200 included members of Parliament, women organisations and secretary generals of opposition political parties as well as Mr. Rashdan.

Dakamseh will face a trial in a military court. In accordance with the criminal law, he is entitled to assign civil lawyers to defend his case. However, the major difference between the military and civil courts is that the military courts' verdicts cannot be appealed.

Israel begins work on Jabal Abu Ghneim

(Continued from page 1)

use violence in their confrontation over the new settlement. Mr. Arafat answered: "Yes, I have done it."

Mr. Arafat, speaking after meeting Israeli opposition Labour Deputy Yossi Sarid in Gaza City, ruled out a meeting with Mr. Netanyahu to ease the crisis.

"There was never any meeting planned to begin with," he said.

Asked how the building of the settlement will affect relations with Israelis, Mr. Arafat replied, "let us wait and see."

When four bulldozers began to dig into the hillside Tuesday afternoon, dozens of Palestinians, including a legislator who hoisted a Palestinian flag high above his head, tried to reach the site from a rocky slope nearby.

A cordon of soldiers pushed them back, and a scuffle ensued. "With our bodies we will protect Jabal Abu Ghneim," the demonstrators chanted.

In the nearby West Bank town of Bethlehem, Palestinian teenagers burned tyres and blocked roads with garbage dumpsters in a scene reminiscent of the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising. The youths whistled and dared Israeli soldiers to chase them.

As a precaution, the Israeli army suspended joint security patrols between Israel and the Palestinians and barred Israeli civilians from entering Palestinian-controlled West Bank towns.

Throughout Israel, security forces were on alert to try and prevent possible Palestinian attacks. Hundreds of police officers were deployed throughout Jerusalem, and all leaves were cancelled, police said.

Security chiefs told an Israeli cabinet meeting Tuesday that Arafat had given the green light for violence against Israel, radio reports said.

Mr. Netanyahu accused Mr. Arafat on Tuesday of giving radicals "a green light for terrorism" against Israel and warned that violent protests would end the peace process.

"We have very hard intelligence that over the past few days ... The Palestinian leadership has given the green light to the worst terrorists on earth to go ahead with bus bombings, suicide attacks and mass killings," Mr. Netanyahu said in an interview with foreign journalists.

He specifically assailed Mr. Arafat for recently releasing Ibrahim Al Mukadneh, a senior leader of the armed wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), calling the militant

"the most notorious terrorist."

Addressing himself to the Palestinian leadership, he said, "I urge them, I call on them, I demand of them to reverse these decisions, to put the terrorists back in jail."

"If the Palestinian leadership believes it can engage in violence ... if they give the green light to Islamic jihad and Hamas to conduct terrorism in our cities, they will not find in us partners" in the peace process, he said.

Several hours after the start of construction work at the Arab East Jerusalem site, only a couple of minor incidents had been reported in the territories.

Protesters trying to march from the West Bank to the building site scuffled briefly with police, and youths at the nearby Aida refugee camp burned tyres and threw stones at Israeli soldiers guarding a nearby religious site, witnesses said.

In the interview, Mr. Netanyahu insisted that signed peace accords with the Palestinians left Israel free to build in Arab East Jerusalem. "It's unconscionable to ask us not to build in Jerusalem, it would choke off the city," he said.

Even while accusing Mr. Arafat of plotting violence against Israel, Mr. Netanyahu insisted he remained committed to the peace process with the Palestinians.

"I'm sure the peace process will continue," he said, adding that he had "some very innovative and productive ideas" for moving the process ahead.

The building project was also a test of resolve for the Palestinians who want to establish a capital in Arab East Jerusalem, and have warned Israel's decision would destroy the peace process.

"We are standing at the crossroads at which this peace process will succeed or die mercilessly," said Ahmad Qureia, the Palestinian parliament speaker, standing with the Palestinian protesters near the project.

The group, among them Faisal Hussein, the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem, had pitched six tents Monday near the site slated for construction and spent a cold, rainy night there.

Throughout Tuesday morning, a stream of visitors came to the tent, including dozens of Israeli peace activists and Gideon Ezra, a senior official in Mr. Netanyahu's hardline Likud Party.

The peace activists raised a poster of the Israeli and Palestinian flags with the slogan: "Two peoples, two states, one future." "The bulldozers have killed the peace process," declared Mr.

Husseini, as he led more than 100 protesters towards the building site. "The only way to defend the peace process is by defending the land. How can you go on with the peace process when there is no more land to negotiate about," Mr. Hussein said.

Palestinians also reportedly rejected a package of Israeli offers, designed to calm fury over the settlement. It included a \$50 million investment in infrastructure in Arab East Jerusalem, promises of quick approval for the opening of Palestinian air and seaports in the Gaza Strip and a promise of "largesse" in the next troop withdrawal from the West Bank, Israeli officials said.

In another gesture Monday, Israel concluded an agreement with the Palestinians to allow Mr. Arafat to use a partially finished airport in Gaza. Talks on fully opening the airport resumed Tuesday.

The United States reaffirmed Monday that Israel's insistence on building the settlement was "a bad idea," but it also called on Palestinians to avoid violence. In September, violent gunbattles broke out between Israeli and Palestinian security forces during Palestinian protests over an Israeli decision to open a new entrance to an archaeological tunnel near Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque. More than 80 Palestinians and Israelis were killed in the clashes.

Mr. Ezra warned Mr. Hussein to prevent violence, saying the Palestinians would be the first to suffer from a subsequent Israeli crackdown. An Israeli soldier had a mounted machine gun trained on the Palestinian tents.

At about the same time, Yuval Rabin, son of the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, met with Mr. Arafat in Gaza and appealed for calm, even if construction began. Mr. Rabin is a peace activist and binerly opposed to the Mr. Netanyahu government.

The final decision to start breaking ground came after a morning meeting by Mr. Netanyahu, senior cabinet ministers and security chiefs.

A convoy of four flatback trucks carrying bulldozers and cranes reached Jabal Abu Ghneim at 2:45 p.m. (12:45 GMT), escorted by police and soldiers. Bulldozers started moving earth at the bottom of the hill, apparently to prepare an access road to the construction site.

At the sight of the bulldozer, the Palestinians on the nearby slope started walking towards the construction site, but were blocked by a cordon of troops.

Election monitors arrive in Yemen

SANAA (AP) — A group of international monitors has arrived in Yemen to oversee parliament elections next month.

The monitors are from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, a Washington-headquartered group which assists with elections worldwide. Monitors from the institute were also here for Yemen's last elections in 1993.

The monitors, who arrived Monday, were invited by the Sanaa-based Arab Democratic Institute, an election watchdog that also promotes democracy.

The European Union has donated some \$520,000 to the institute to help with the elections. About \$400,000 will go to register women and encourage them to vote. The balance will pay for election monitoring.

Ballooning for the 301-member parliament is scheduled for April 27.

The elections are being boycotted by the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), the country's largest opposition group.

David Nassar, head of the National Democratic Institute group, on Tuesday termed the boycott "regrettable" but said it was the right of all parties to make such a decision.

Yemeni authorities have already begun increasing security for the voting. Police checkpoints have been set up at the entrances of the country's 18 provinces to search for weapons.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh's ruling General People's Congress (GPC) Party and the Islamic Islah Party led by Sheikh Abdullah Hussein Al Ahmar, the parliament speaker, have controlled the government for the past four years. They are expected to win the majority again in April.

The YSP announced its boycott after saying it was not satisfied with promises from the ruling parties that the elections would be free and fair.

They also demanded the return of the party's headquarters and other properties, which were confiscated after the 1994 civil war.

The war pitted Mr. Saleh and his followers against the former leadership of the YSP, which was then in control of southern Yemen.

North and South Yemen merged in 1990. Yemen, in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, is one of the Arab World's poorest countries.

Kabariti cites his government's record

(Continued from page 11)

struction of housing units in Jordan, was granted several privileges in view of its role in developing the housing sector in the Kingdom.

However, in recent years the bank concentrated more on conducting regular commercial business than housing activities.

A number of senators expressed reservation over cancelling the Housing Bank Law, pointing to the effects it would have on the underprivileged and lower-income citizens.

Mr. Kabariti told the Senate: "Personally, I would

have wished that the Housing Bank could remain a specialised one because of the serious need for its presence. In its present state, however, the Housing Bank has nothing to do with housing except by name."

The government, he added, will extend tax incentives and exemptions to other commercial banks in the Kingdom if they start granting specialised loans to the housing sector.

Members of the Senate's Financial Committee maintained that if the law is endorsed as is, it would create a constitutional loop-

hole. They contended that problems will arise because of the difference in the time the bank needs to chart its new course and the implementation of the law.

Minister of Higher Education Abdullah Ensour agreed and a number of senators suggested that the Senate's discussions of the law should be taken as a reference document in case any problem arises in the near future.

The Senate also approved the 33-article draft law on the Jordan Cooperative Organisation which the Lower House passed earlier.

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Yamani predicts low oil prices in '97

DOHA (R) — Former Saudi oil minister, Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani has questioned current Riyadh thinking that oil had moved to a higher \$20-\$25 a barrel price range.

Sheikh Yamani — who orchestrated petroleum policy in the world's largest oil producer and exporter from 1962 until 1986 — said he believed oil prices would fall this year because of higher supplies from non-OPEC producers and quota violations by OPEC members such as Venezuela and Nigeria.

"I wish them good luck. I do not see it that way (\$20-\$25 a barrel). In 1997 prices will be much lower," Sheikh Yamani said in an interview at a reception for a gas conference in Qatar.

Saudi oil sources have said that growing world petroleum demand coupled with an overestimate of non-OPEC supplies would lift prices to a sustainable higher \$20-\$25 a barrel band.

Oil prices this year, despite the return of limited amounts of Iraqi oil under a United Nations oil-for-food deal, have mainly held above \$20 because of strong winter demand.

Sheikh Yamani said that Riyadh was losing market share and drew parallels with 1985 when oil prices slumped amid steep price discounting by OPEC states including Saudi Arabia.

"What happened in 1985 is being repeated now. They (Saudi Arabia) see other producers producing more while their share is reducing," he said.

During his 24-year tenure as oil minister, Sheikh Yamani became the embodiment of Arab oil power and implemented a policy of using high Saudi oil production to curb the ambitions of pricing "hawks" like Libya and Algeria and, outside OPEC, Britain.

Saudi '97 income set to surpass projected level

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia's income in 1997 is expected to surpass its projected level by nearly \$10 billion as world oil prices are forecast to remain strong, an official report said.

In its quarterly economic and stocks bulletin released Thursday, the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) said the exports of the Gulf oil giant were expected to reach around \$53.8 billion in 1997.

"Expectations are that growth in the global economy will continue this year, which means oil prices will remain as strong as they were last year," the Arab League's main financial organization said.

Oil accounts for the bulk of Saudi Arabia's exports while the rest includes petrochemicals, farming and light industrial products.

Announcing its budget for 1997, Saudi Arabia projected revenues at 164 billion riyals (\$43.7 billion) and expenditure at 181 billion riyals (\$45.2 billion). This created a deficit of around \$4.5 billion.

Economists said the AMF's projection about Saudi income in 1997 meant the budget could record a surplus for the first time in several years.

But they stressed this depended on whether Riyadh complied with the projected spending level.

"From the past experiences, the Saudi government has shown an inability to abide the specified expenditure for some reasons," an expert said.

"They include the temptation of high prices and the need to ease the domestic debt burden, which is important for economic growth," he added.

A surge of nearly \$3 in oil prices in 1996 brought the world's biggest oil producer and exporter nearly \$8 billion in additional income, tempting it to use the surplus to pay billions of dollars in arrears for local contractors and farmers.

The extra income could have eliminated Saudi Arabia's budget deficit but it was only slightly cut because of excess spending.

The Abu Dhabi-based AMF said Saudi Arabia had finished payment of its external debt in 1995 and had settled most of its internal debt following the payment of around \$5.99 billion to the contractors and farmers in 1996.

It cited official figures from Riyadh as showing the Saudi gross domestic product grew nominally by around 8.7 per cent in 1996, nearly double the 4.3 per cent growth rate recorded in the previous year.

It attributed the growth to expansions in some public and private sectors and the increase in oil prices to around \$20 from \$16.8.

In real terms, the Saudi economy grew by 7.7 per cent in 1996 as inflation did not exceed one per cent, it said.

The report gave no projections for growth this year but bankers have forecast it at nearly half the 1996 rate.

Experts said demand for ATFP loans remained low because most Arab consumers prefer foreign products and local industries are limited.

Arab states agreed last month on a gradual removal of customs barriers to create a free trade zone that has eluded them for decades.

They hope the zone would pave the way for a common Arab market, which will be one of the biggest consumer markets in the world. The total imports of Arab countries stood at around \$125 billion in 1995 and their gross domestic product at \$528 billion.

Arabs show little interest in trade fund

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are showing little interest in an ambitious fund created seven years ago to finance flagging trade among them, its figures have shown.

The Arab Trade Fund Programme (ATFP) has approved credits to members of around \$670 million since it was set up in 1990.

This compares with its financing capacity of \$1 billion per year.

The ATFP board discussed its activity at its Abu Dhabi headquarters this week but gave no reason for the slow demand.

ATFP has a paid-up capital of \$500 million, half of which was subscribed by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund and the rest by other regional financial institutions and banks.

It finances only home-made products except oil with the aim of encouraging local production. Officials have hoped it would boost inter-Arab trade, which has remained below 12 per cent of the total commercial exchange among the 22 Arab League members because of lack of funds, political rifts, high customs barriers and problems associated with storage and marketing.

Experts said demand for ATFP loans remained low because most Arab consumers prefer foreign products and local industries are limited.

Arab states agreed last month on a gradual removal of customs barriers to create a free trade zone that has eluded them for decades.

They hope the zone would pave the way for a common Arab market, which will be one of the biggest consumer markets in the world. The total imports of Arab countries stood at around \$125 billion in 1995 and their gross domestic product at \$528 billion.

Iran has 17% of total world gas reserves

KISH ISLAND, Iran (R) — Iran's natural gas reserves total 23 trillion cubic metres representing 17 per cent of total world gas reserves, a senior Iranian energy official has said.

Nejad Hosseini, deputy petroleum minister of international affairs told a conference of 300 international and local businessmen on this Iranian island that Iran had the second largest reserves of gas after Russia.

Iranian gas output would rise from the current annual output of 81 billion cubic metres to 126 billion cubic metres in 2000, to keep pace with rising domestic demand and to meet export projects to Turkey and the Indian subcontinent.

Correction

In its coverage of the conference on micro-finance in Tuesday's edition, the Jordan Times mistakenly reported that:

Richard Rosenberg, senior advisor at the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP) Secretariat at the World Bank reviewed factors that promoted the necessity for micro-finance practices in general.

He named them to be: 1- Poor borrowers can't or won't repay bank loans. 2- Poor people cannot be charged enough to cover costs. 3- Private institutions and banks would not do micro-finance. 4- Commercial-cost money cannot finance micro-finance enterprises.

The correct version should have read that:

Richard Rosenberg, senior advisor at the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP) Secretariat at the World Bank reviewed common misconceptions about micro-finance. The common, four misconceptions are: 1- Poor borrowers can't or won't repay bank loans. 2- Poor people cannot be charged enough to cover costs. 3- Private institutions and banks would not do micro-finance. 4- Commercial-cost money cannot finance micro-finance enterprises.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make sure you know what your fellow associates expect of you today, and try to please them. Speed the evening at home with your family and you can make everyone who resides under your roof quite content.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be sensible in considering the costs of any recreations you have in mind. Don't wear yourself out in trying to express your talents later this evening or you could find yourself not feeling your own self.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Discuss some conditions with those you live with today, gain more harmony and comfort in the process. Listen carefully to the advice of your close friends who have not steered you wrong previously.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Attend to your correspondence in a positive and upbeat manner. Handle travel plans today so that you save time and money. Later this evening will be good for you to consult with knowledgeable people.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A trusted advisor can give you fine advice today if you contact this person early in the day. Reserve this evening for your loved ones and you can have a pleasant time. This is the time to meet with fellow associates.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make some time today to have a necessary chat with your close friends. Listen to their ideas, and the best ones should be followed. Later this evening will be good for you to meet with a bigwig for good advice.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If you look carefully today, you can find a way to increase your income while cutting down on expenses. Take better care of your health so that you won't be sick and miss any opportunity to be successful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be more enthusiastic in going after your personal goals today, and you'll have better results. Join forces only with people you know you can trust so that you won't be disappointed in the days ahead.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Investigate logically whatever puzzles you today, and the truth will soon unfold. Have a candid talk with your mate concerning the days ahead and what your plans are for your success. This is a good time to go out on the town.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If it is offered today, accept the backing of good friends in gaining your personal wishes. Enjoy a favourite hobby with your loved ones and thereby you can all become much closer together. Seek out the advice of fellow associates.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be vigilant in protecting your reputation today, or you could stand to lose a lot. Make sure you have the facts straight before asking any favours. Later this evening will be good for you to go out on the town with your mate.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You are very good at handling details today, and you should use this ability to improve any new ventures. A good friend can help you in business later this evening, so take the advice which he or she provides.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	SLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.6750	0.6297	1.4358	122.51	1.3733	1685.50	1.8868	5.8880	
GB Sterling	1.5860	2.9608	2.2864	194.39	2.1608	2677.50	2.9874	8.9851	
JP Yen	0.0082	1.3659	0.5133	1.1741	1.1201	13.75	153.82	4.6101	
IT Lira	0.0006	0.9523	0.3729	0.8853	1378.36	0.5137	11.17	3.3492	
FR Franc	0.1768	0.2563	0.1113	25.4639	21.86	0.2429	33.36	33.3600	

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	19.20	18.50
WTI	18.20	17.50
Bony	19.20	18.50
UL Gas	198.00	200.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2686	0.4469	0.18791	0.38413	32.6936
KW Dinar	3.2927	5.51876	2.0734	4.74383	403.714
CY Pound	1.9805	3.3182	1.2467	2.8518	242.882

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz)	347	347.5
Silver (oz)	370.5	371.5
Platinum (oz)	2330	2340
CU (3 Months)	708	708
Lead (3 Months)	708	708
Ni (3 Months)	708	708

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Period	1	3	6	9	1
Crncy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.37	5.53	5.68	5.84	6.00
DEM	5.53	5.68	5.84	6.00	6.16
JPY	5.53	5.68	5.84	6.00	6.16
FRF	5.53	5.68	5.84	6.00	6.16
ITL	5.53	5.68	5.84	6.00	6.16

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Defers
Coffee (c/bu)	179.25	Spot
Cocoa (c/bu)	180.1	Spot
Sugar (c/bu)	309.5	Spot
Wheat (c/bu)	181	Spot
Soya (c/bu)	22.8	Spot
Barley (c/bu)	0	Spot
Rice (c/bu)	800	Spot

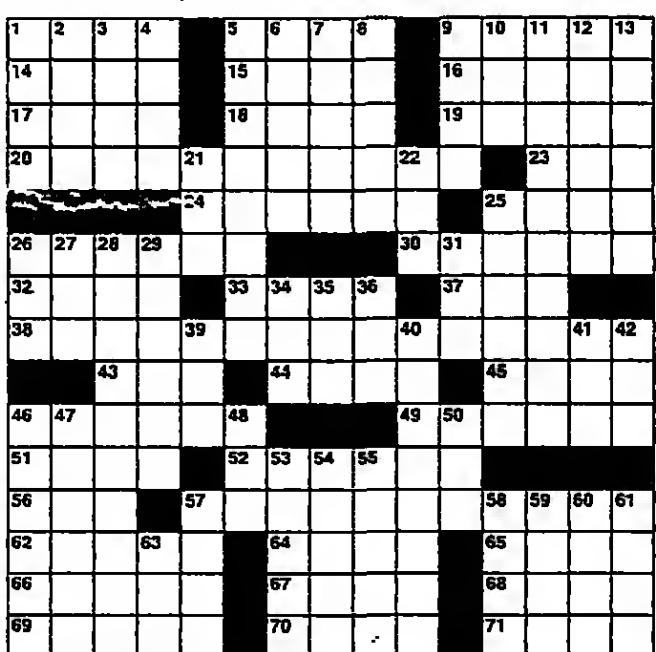
JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
DE Mark	0.4176	0.4197
FR Franc	0.1238	0.1244
JP Yen	0.0082	0.0083
NL Guilder	0.3711	0.373

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

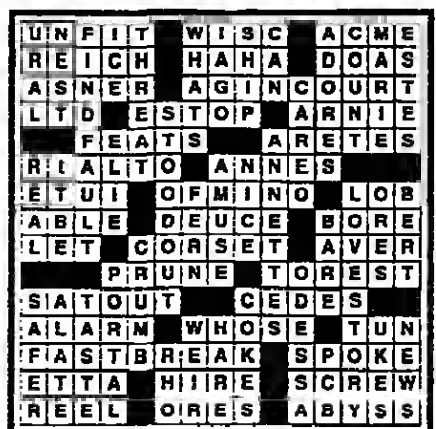
- 1 Phone plug
- 5 Sound of a hit
- 9 Calcareous rock deposits
- 14 Conestoga team
- 15 Author Victor
- 16 Tangle
- 17 White House name
- 18 Word to the wise
- 19 Hawk's home
- 20 Up to one's ears
- 23 Antagonist
- 24 Gather
- 25 Kind of seller
- 26 Slambang, for one
- 30 United —
- 32 Christmas
- 33 Bat
- 37 List ender
- 38 Not up to snuff
- 43 He reigns in Spain
- 44 Appear
- 45 —mutton
- 46 — Hill, NC
- 49 Fund raiser's goal



by Virginia Yates

DOWN

- 1 Runs for fun
- 2 Nerve cell part
- 3 Mackerel's kin
- 4 Was in on
- 5 Mystery
- 6 Gardeners dig it
- 7 Go-between
- 8 Haut — (high society)
- 9 Kingpin
- 10 Before deux
- 11 Off-the-wall
- 12 Songlike
- 13 Frozen rains
- 21 Comedian
- 22 Sounds of hesitation
- 25 Fight
- 26 Wildebeest
- 27 Charged particle
- 28 The worse for wear
- 29 Censors, in a way
- 31 Hyson
- 34 Sounds of surprise
- 35 Pipe joint
- 36 Reverence
- 38 Bread type
- 40 Stress
- 41 Urge
- 42 Sturgeon product
- 46 Fare from New Orleans
- 47 Persevere
- 48 Alphabet run
- 50 Fond du —
- 53 Take up
- 54 Get again
- 55 Cape Cod town
- 57 Operated
- 58 Auto shop request
- 59 Moonstone
- 60 Indians
- 61 Catnap
- 63 Sheep



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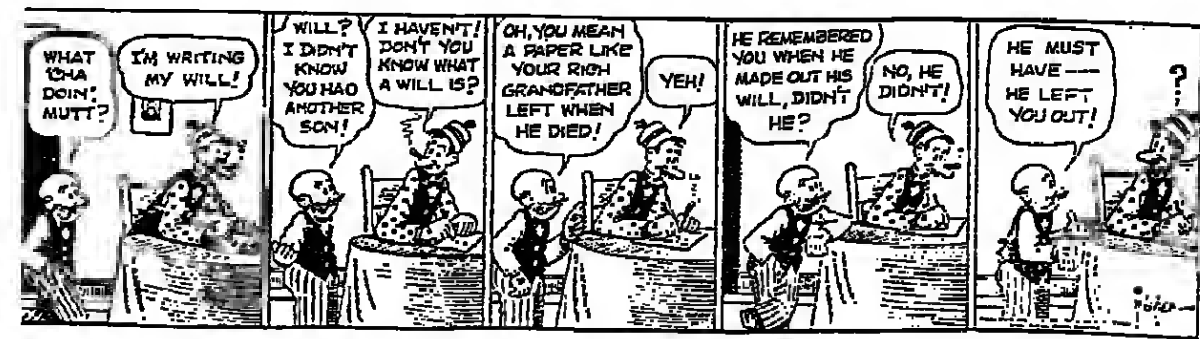
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



ADB chief: Asia's capital needs putting pressure on global rates

MANILA (AFP) — Developing Asia's huge demand for outside financing for infrastructure development may be helping push global interest rates up, Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Mitsuo Sato has said.

This need, which he quantified at one trillion dollars until 2000, should not have been the case if the region's capital markets had been well-developed to mobilise substantial domestic savings, he told an Asian securities conference here.

"Concerns have been voiced that the region's massive demand for capital, when combined with the increasing investment demand of other emerging economies in the world,

could significantly drain the world savings and therefore put an upward pressure on the global interest rates," he said.

Asian economies needed only to raise infrastructure spending to seven per cent of their gross national product (GNP), up from five per cent, and "the increase should not be so difficult," particularly for east and south east Asian nations with high savings rates, he said.

Developing Asian economies as a whole can generate up to one trillion dollars in savings every year and mobilising a quarter, or even just 10 per cent, of that amount would be "sufficient to accommodate future infrastructure

demand."

However, Mr. Sato said "high domestic savings have not been effectively transmitted into actual long-term investment, due to the under-developed state of financial markets in the region."

The bulk of domestic savings are being "converted to short-term credits in informal financial markets," while "some have been simply hoarded," and, in one country, up to 44 per cent of savings are being invested in gold.

"As a result, many of these countries may have to depend on external capital to finance the long-term investment," Mr. Sato said.

Lawzi: Jordan neglected agricultural marketing

AMMAN (Petra) — Agricultural exports have accounted for 18.7 per cent of the gross agricultural production in 1996, compared with 47 per cent in 1989/1990, according to the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) Director General Salem Al Lawzi.

In an interview with Jordan News Agency, Petra, Dr. Lawzi said the consecutive Jordanian governments over the past three decades have directed increased attention to increasing agricultural production and expanding agricultural land without paying enough attention to marketing.

He said marketing has been neglected over the past three decades due to many reasons, including, among others, the availability of local and foreign markets, and the lack of actual competition in the neighbouring countries.

He noted that the AMC has been working hard to organise agricultural production in order to achieve a balance between agricultural output, local market and well-planned export needs to avoid marketing problems and bottlenecks and prevent sharp drop in prices.

Dr. Lawzi said the adoption of the cropping pattern system has helped Jordan reach the equilibrium between production and consumption, noting in this regard that the Kingdom has been able to produce its own needs of potatoes after applying the cropping system. Jordan used to import 30 tonnes of potatoes each year before applying the cropping system, he said.

Reviewing his corporation's efforts to promote agricultural exports, Dr. Lawzi said the corporation has cooperated with international organisations, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the German Development Agency to promote Jordanian agricultural exports to international markets, particularly to European markets.

Dr. Lawzi noted that the AMC has carried out over the past few years more than 20 studies on the most difficult marketing problems facing the export of Jordanian agricultural products to Europe.

In a bid to encourage exports to Europe, the AMC has formed a special society called "The Jordanian Society for Producers and Exporters of Vegetables and Fruits to Europe," provided financial and moral support for it to enable it to export quality products to Europe.

Jordan firms mull country's first global listing

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuter

AMMAN — Leading Jordanian corporations are mulling recent proposals by international investment banks to issue the country's first Global Depository Receipt (GDR) to tap fund in world markets, bankers and analysts said Tuesday.

Local investment bankers say leading banks, such as Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Group (HSBC), Merrill Lynch, United Bank of Switzerland (UBS) and Morgan Grenfell have all submitted GDR listing proposals for a number of blue-chip firms.

Their offers to structure, manage, place and market GDR deals range from repackaging existing shares into a GDR to raising new capital for the offer. Most of the GDRs on offer have ranged from \$30-\$50 million, the minimum to allow for fixed legal and auditing costs of the offerings, says Ziad Al Basha, securities manager at British Bank of the Middle East.

Bankers say Jordan Cement Factories, Arab Potash Company, both seeking funds for major industrial expansion projects, and larger banks such as Housing Bank and Jordan National Bank are among the firms which receive proposals.

Mr. Basha said global banks see a real market for Jordanian stock, eyed by emerging markets funds which want to avoid the pitfalls of local bureaucracy and custodianship fees.

Mr. Basha said major corporations in Jordan have a need for GDRs which offer cheaper funds, raise company profiles internationally while bringing them passive long term equity investors. This was an incentive for some firms which fear controlling foreign stakes, he said.

Jordan, the first Arab market included in the International Finance Corporation index — widely used as benchmark by emerging market funds —

has lagged behind countries in the region such as Turkey, Egypt, Morocco in GDR listings, part of their stepped up privatisation plans.

Bankers blame the lack of Jordanian GDRs on a poor privatisation record and modest investment by foreigners after delays in passing an investment law, all of which helped other markets eclipse Jordan.

"We are the only Middle East or North African country that does not have a privatisation programme... we are still in the pre-Gazouiri era," said Mr. Basha in reference to Egypt's reform-minded prime minister who has stepped up economic reform since he was appointed last year.

Other discouraging factors are GDR qualification requirements which exclude many Jordanian blue-chips because of a small capital base and a 50 per cent foreign ownership ceiling that would limit the amount of shares available, analysts said.

"Only a handful of companies qualify for a true and liquid GDR listing... the main hampering factor is the current size," said Omar Al Masri, managing director of Atlas Investment Group.

Mr. Masri said GDRs in leading blue-chips would raise new capital to issue the GDRs, bypassing a shortage of popular stock which critics argue is a major constraint on foreign buying.

"Because of tighter liquidity currently prevailing in the Amman Financial Market, the GDRs offer foreign investors an alternative route to buy stock on a golden plate," Mr. Masri said.

The three stocks alone — Arab Bank, Islamic Bank, Arab Potash account for 52 per cent of the market's total capitalisation of 3.5 billion dinar (\$5 billion). The first two have already reached a 50 per cent foreign ceiling and the third has only a 0.08 per cent free floating shares.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Government plans incentives to expand, modernise large public transport vehicles

** IN A drive to give the companies and owners of public transport vehicles wider incentives to modernise their cars and buses, the government plans to exempt vehicles that have a capacity to carry no less than 40 passengers from taxes and fees charged at a rate of 35 per cent. The government has recently given additional facilities and incentives to owners of old taxis and service cabs who were not able to replace their cars with new ones.

A fleet of 650 buses, 4,250 medium-size passenger buses and 15,749 small taxis and service cars in addition to 1,200 rental cars serve the public transport sector in the Kingdom. Most of this fleet is operated by the private sector.

An official source told Al Ra'i that no specific date has been fixed yet but that an initial agreement has been reached between the ministries of transport and finance on the importance of issuing a decision in this regard soon. Such a decision would be a facilitating move to attract large companies to invest in the remaining bus routes which are currently owned by the Public Transport Corporation and which the government plans to float to the private sector in the coming few months (Al Ra'i).

Cabinet awards licence to private sector investors to set up free zone

** THE CABINET has granted a licence to a group of investors to establish a free zone in the Mafrqa area. The minister of transport said the free zone, which will be fully run by the private sector, will be near the border with Saudi Arabia and will specialise in transport services and ordinary cold storage as well as truck services. The minister indicated that the government was considering other applications to license more freezones in the country.

Meanwhile, the minister told Al Ra'i that the tender for designing a new industrial port to support the existing port has been floated. He said the new port will be built in an area near the Saudi border in the south and will be expanded in the future to include the present port.

This new port, the minister pointed out, will be assigned for serving Jordan's mineral exports and will be offered in its entirety for investment to the private sector.

The total cost to build this port will amount to JD50 million (Al Ra'i).



"Everything about you has changed since we got married. Are you part of the witness protection program?"

JORDAN TIMES
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JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Herri Arnold and Mike Arginton

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SYMFIL

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Answer: A

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Princess Alia heads Jordanian delegation to Qatar horse festival

By Lutfi Zu'bi in Doha.
Ibrahim Haddadin in Damascus
and Roufan Nahhas in Amman

PRESIDENT of the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein heads Jordan's delegation to the 6th Qatar International Horse Festival which opens in Doha, Qatar Thursday.

Eighteen Jordanian horses will take part in the festival. Ten will be competing in the endurance race, two in the horse racing competition which will start Wednesday and six in the horse show.

The much-awaited 4th endurance race will start Friday covering 42

kilometres of desert terrain.

Horses will start the race at 6 a.m. at Ras Laffan and reach the finish line at east of the city of Roweis.

Jordanian horses proved their presence in the past races. Ibn Zaman, owned by Fayad Al Assaf and ridden by jockey Mohammad Abu Amara, is one of the top entries this year.

It also won first place in the Jordanian endurance race last October sponsored by Emirates Airlines.

National Equestrian team leaves for Syria

Meanwhile, the Kingdom's national equestrian team left the Syrian cap-

ital Tuesday to take part in Al Basel Equestrian Championship scheduled to take place March 20-24 in Damascus.

The four-day championship celebrates the National Day of Syria with teams from several Arabic and European countries taking part.

Jordan's team consists of Hani Bisharat, Husam Baho, Sinan Nashabibi, Fares Taber, Ibrahim Bisharat, Abeer Khatib, Suzan Al Bakheet, Shereen Al Rasekh, Saad Kilani and Jalal Qutob.

Jordan's captain and veteran jockey Hani Bisharat said that the team trained hard and hoped to score an advanced position in the event.

Former Ferrari driver says mechanical failure caused Senna's crash

IMOLA, Italy (AP) — Giving strength to the prosecution's case, former Ferrari driver Michele Alboreto told an Italian court Monday that a mechanical failure caused Ayrton Senna's fatal crash during the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix.

Alboreto, the second driver to testify in the trial of six top Formula One officials charged with manslaughter in the death of the three-time world champion, made his statement after studying the footage of the accident in court.

"I believe that the cause of Ayrton Senna's crash was a mechanical failure," said the 40-year-old Italian driver. He added, however, he could not be specific about the kind of mechanical failure.

Alboreto, who drove with Ferrari for five years in the 1980s, escaped unhurt in a high-speed accident at the Tamburello corner in 1991 — the same corner of the Imola circuit where Ayrton Senna crashed on May 1, 1994.

Alboreto's crash, when he drove with the footwork team, and other accidents at the same corner suffered by Nelson Piquet, Gerhard Berger and Riccardo

Patrese, were all caused by mechanical failures, prosecutor Maurizio Passarini alleged.

"Mechanical failures are possible in auto racing given the extremes of the sport," said Alboreto, who gave up Formula One after winning five of 194 Grand Prix races.

The prosecution in the trial, which opened last month, contends that a badly modified steering column cracked in Senna's Williams-Renault.

The Brazilian driver died of massive head injuries after he failed to make the Tamburello corner and crashed into a concrete wall.

Frank Williams, head of the Williams-Renault team, team technical director Patrick Head and team designer Adrian Newey are among those standing trial.

Race organizer Federico Bendinelli, circuit manager Giorgio Poggi and race director Roland Bruynseraede have been charged on grounds that the Tamburello corner did not meet safety standards.

"The swerve on the right of Senna's car leads me to think of a mechanical failure," Alboreto told reporters after testifying. "I

don't believe small bumps on the asphalt could have caused a F-1 car to speed off the track."

Italian defence lawyers for Frank Williams and head contended earlier in the trial that the condition of the asphalt at the Imola circuit had not been properly investigated.

The Tamburello corner has been redesigned and the track has been resurfaced since Senna's fatal crash.

"I hope this trial can help us to understand what happened to Senna," Alboreto said. "But it would have been far better that an investigation into the case would have been launched by the sports world itself."

The court also heard testimony Monday from an Italian race steward and a Renault official about data-recording boxes recovered from the wrecked car after the crash.

The Williams box recorded data from the car's gearbox and chassis while the Renault box recorded engine data.

Patrizio Nocco testified that both boxes appeared superficially damaged but in order. The Renault official, Bernard Duffort, said he had been told by Williams officials that the Williams box did not contain data as a result damage suffered in the crash.

The trial, which continues Tuesday, is seen as a major threat to auto racing in Italy. FIA, the world governing body of the sport, suggested recently that F-1 teams may be afraid to race on Italian circuits if there are convictions in the Senna case.

The six defendants, who did not attend Monday's session, could face up to five years in prison if convicted.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMMAM HIRSH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - Both: vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKQ873 ♠ 73 ♠ 65 ♠ QJ102

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

1♣ Pass 1♠ Pass

2NT Pass ?

What do you bid now?

A - You certainly are going forward to game, but no trump might not be the right spot. Your slightly unbalanced distribution suggests the hand might play better in a suit, so you should endeavor to find out whether North has three-card support for your spades. Bid three clubs, to see whether partner can take a preference to three spades.

Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AK98 ♠ A102 ♠ QJ7 ♠ A984

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - You have a very sound 14 points, but even if partner has a maximum of 18, there are only 32 high-card points in the combined holding — not enough for slam. Bid three no trump, and be happy you are in a comfortable spot.

Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AK53 ♠ 62 ♠ 105 ♠ AQ654

The bidding has proceeded:

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♦ Pass ?

What action do you take?

A - In responding to a takeout double, it is usually better to bid a four-card major rather than a five-card minor. That is especially true when the opening bid has been in a major — partner almost always has at least four cards in the other major. Bid one spade.

Q. 4 - As South, vulnerable, you

hold:

AK985 ♠ 635 ♠ 9873 ♠ 47

The bidding has proceeded:

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♣ 1♦ Pass ?

What action do you take?

A - Don't even contemplate bidding two spades — with support for your suit, North might have made a takeout double instead of overcalling. The correct action with three trumps, two quick tricks and a ruffing value is to support partner. Raise to two hearts.

Q. 5 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

4734 ♠ A1985 ♠ 52 ♠ 473

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

1♣ 1♦ Pass ?

What action do you take?

A - You have about as little as the law allows for your one-heart response. If partner did not have the value to bid game, you certainly do not. Since the jump raise was invitational, not forcing, pass — with alacrity.

Q. 6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK ♠ 754 ♠ A10843 ♠ 4984

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

1♣ 1♦ Pass ?

What action do you take?

A - While there is little chance that one spade doubled will get passed out, why take the risk? Bid two diamonds. Had East passed, you could not have responded at the two-level — that would have been forcing. Since all strong responding hands start with a redouble, on this sequence you can afford to bid the suit to show length and unbalancedness with a spade contract.

Pistons, Magic and Nets lose

CLEVELAND (AP) — Tyrone Hill hit a short hook with 38 seconds left to give Cleveland the lead and Bob Sura added two free throws in the final seconds as the Cavaliers defeated the Detroit Pistons 85-82 Monday night.

Hill, who gave Cleveland the lead for good at 83-82, finished with 26 points.

Otis Thorpe led Detroit with 20 points and Grant Hill added 19. Detroit's last lead was 82-81 with 57.5 seconds left.

Hawks 112, Magic 107

In Atlanta, the Hawks rallied from a 10-point deficit in the final 48.9 seconds of regulation and defeated Orlando in overtime to end a three-game losing streak.

Steve Smith scored 38 points and Christian Laettner added 27 for the Hawks. But it was Mookie Blaylock who came up with the biggest plays of the game on defence.

Blaylock stole an inbound pass and was fouled by Horace Grant while driving up the court with 2.3 seconds remaining. Blaylock hit both free throws to even the score at 98 and send the game into overtime.

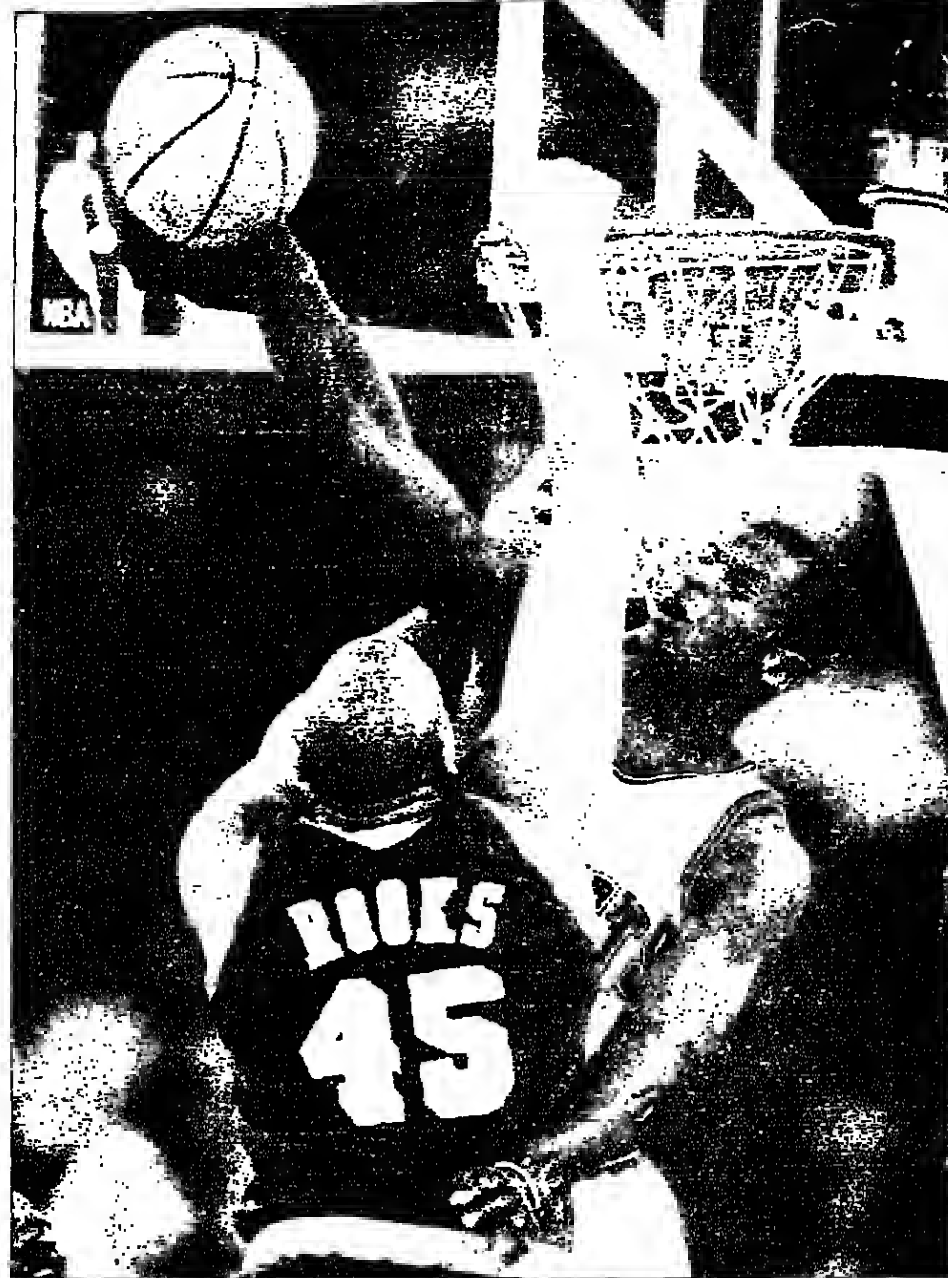
Penny Hardaway, who led the Magic with 35 points, scored the first basket of the extra period, but Blaylock put the Hawks ahead to stay, 101-100, on a 3-pointer. Blaylock finished with 18 points after scoring only six through the first three quarters.

Jazz 114, Hornets 93

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Karl Malone scored 37 points. John Stockton reached the 12,000-assist mark and the Utah Jazz beat Charlotte.

Utah held Charlotte without a field goal for a 6 1/2-minute span bridging the second and third quarters.

Malone added nine rebounds and five assists as Utah won for the fourth consecutive time and ninth in 10 games. Stockton, already the NBA's all-time leader in assists and steals, had 23 points to go with five assists and two steals. That



Denver Nuggets forward Antonio McDyess (R) rejects the slam dunk attempt by Los Angeles Lakers center Sean Rooks in second quarter action in Denver. LA Lakers beat Denver 113-94 (Reuters photo)

boosted his 13-year career totals to 12,000 assists and 2,499 steals.

Celtics 126, Bucks 117

In Boston, Eric Williams scored 25 points and Boston snapped its eight-game losing streak. The loss was Milwaukee's 11th loss in their last 13 games, while Boston avoided a franchise record eighth consecutive home loss as it posted just its second win overall in 23 games.

The Celtics used a 17-2 run to turn an 84-80 deficit into a 97-86 lead early in the fourth quarter. The Bucks closed within four points three times thereafter, the last at 111-107 with 3:45 to go. But Williams scored the next five points for a nine-point lead.

Glenn Robinson led Milwaukee with 28 points, but fouled out with 4:49 left and the bucks trailing by six.

Bullets 109, Spurs 85

In San Antonio, Chris Webber scored 24 points and Rod Strickland had 16 to lead Washington over San Antonio. The Bullets hit their first eight shots of the third quarter to break open a close game as Webber, Calbert Cheaney, Juwan Howard and George Muresan scored two baskets apiece in the 5 1/2-minute, 20-4 run to open a 75-54 lead. Sub Cory Alexander paced the Spurs with a career-high 24 points, including six 3-pointers.

Lakers 113, Nuggets 94

In Denver, Nick Van Exel scored 30 points and Byron Scott reached 15,000 career points with 15 as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Denver Nuggets.

Elden Campbell added 21 points and 10 rebounds for the Lakers, who have swept the team's two games in Denver for the eighth time.

Antonio McDyess passed the 2,000-point plateau with 26 points and had 10 rebounds.

Suns 116, Warriors 95

Jason Kidd hit eight 3-pointers, including one to cap a 17-0 fourth-quarter run, and finished with a season-high 33 points as Phoenix downed Golden State.

Kidd tied the franchise record with his eight baskets from beyond the arc. He made seven straight treys before missing and finished 8 of 9 on 3-pointers and 12 of 16 overall.

Kevin Johnson added his 13th career triple double with 19 points, 13 assists and 10 rebounds for Phoenix, which won its third consecutive game.

Donyell Marshall scored 21 points to lead Golden State.



Charlotte Hornets guard Muggsy Bogues (R) steals the ball from Utah Jazz guard John Stockton, during first half NBA action in the Charlotte Coliseum. Utah beat Charlotte 114-93 (Reuters photo)

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Expressions of interest should be received at the Canadian Embassy by no later than 15:00 on the 27th day of March, 1997.

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11 countries confirm participation in Pan-Arab Games

By Mohammad Ghannam
in Beirut and
Aleen Bannayan
in Amman

LEBANESE OFFICIALS Tuesday announced that 11 countries had so far confirmed participation in the 8th Pan-Arab Games scheduled to take place in Beirut July 12-27.

Zeid Khatami, the secretary general of the Lebanese Ministry of Sports, said Jordan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Sudan, Lebanon, and Yemen were the first to contact the organisers and sent a preliminary entry form.

Khatami also noted that 19 events had been set for the Games including handball, gymnastics, body building, hockey, diving, and water polo.

Jordan's Minister of Youth Mohammad Daoudieh reiterated the Kingdom's full support for the event noting that the Jordanian delegation would actively take part in the largest gathering of Arab youth since the event was last held in 1992.

Jordan will be competing in 17 of the 19 events at the Games and the Jordan Olympic Committee has already sent the organisers a preliminary list of the 257-member delegation including 130 men and 37 women athletes, 64 officials and coaches, and 26 referees.

At a meeting of the ministerial committee entrusted with the task of

inspecting Lebanon's facilities and preparations for the Games, Mr. Daoudieh noted that he had utmost trust that Lebanon would be ready to host the event.

"Work is underway all over Lebanon. We will cooperate with our Lebanese brethren to resolve any problems that might arise," he added.

He said Jordan "was very enthusiastic about participation in the Games since they are not only a sporting event but a great chance of demonstrating Arab solidarity."

Formed by the Arab Ministers of Sports and Youth (AMSU) in their recent meeting in Cairo, the ministerial committee includes in addition to Mr. Daoudieh, the Lebanese Minister of Sports Jean Obeid, AMSU executive officer and Egyptian Minister of Youth Abdul Mun'em Amara. Syrian Sports Minister Samih Mudallal, Secretary General of the Arab Sports Federation Othman Sa'ad, AMSU representative Abdul Hamid Wakil and Zeid Khatami, the secretary general of the Lebanese Ministry of Sports.

The ministerial committee has so far visited sports facilities at the Beirut's sports city, the golf club, the Mont La Salle Club, and the Bouj Hammoud stadium.

On the sidelines of the visit Mr. Daoudieh met with Egyptian Minister of Youth Abdul Mun'em Amara during which the Egyptian official lauded the relations between

Jordan and Egypt in all aspects.

"We have to enhance that in sports and youth as well. We can benefit each other by exchanging experiences in training and refereeing as well as visits of sports teams of both countries," he said.

Jordan's preliminary entry form at the Games includes participating in athletics, basketball, karate, fencing, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, boxing, cycling, equestrian, soccer, weightlifting, judo, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling, shooting and volleyball.

Other events at the Games include golf, yachting and tennis.

An evaluation team from the Jordan Olympic Committee has started meeting participating sports federations to finalise the Kingdom's delegation.

Jordan finished 9th in the last Pan-Arab Games with 1 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals.

Hosts Syria topped the medals table with 48 points, 31 silver, 37 bronze followed by Egypt and Algeria.

The event had been due to be held last year but was postponed after the Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon.

The Pan-Arab Games were held in Alexandria '53, Beirut '57, Casablanca '61, Cairo '65, Damascus '76, Morocco '85, Damascus '92.

Arab Clubs Basketball Championship Jazireh close 17-point gap but lose to Algeria's Bofariq

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S third ranked basketball team, Al Jazireh, Monday lost 79-71 to Algeria's Bofariq in their first match at the 11th Arab Clubs Basketball Championship currently underway in Nabeul, Tunisia.

Bofariq won the first half 47-36 and expanded the gap to 65-48 in the second half. However, Al Jazireh's perseverance enabled them to narrow the gap and lost the match with an eight point difference.

Star centre Hussam Lutfi was the team's top scorer with 25 points, followed by Ma'an Odeh 15, Seif Lada'a 11, Ala' Bilbeisi 8, Yousef Abu Bakr 5, Inab Qaddoumi 4, and Mu'tasem Salameh 2.

The players morale will surely improve with the arrival of Nasser Alawneh, a key rebounder and scorer, who was unable to leave with the team because of work commitments.

Al Jazireh will next face Tunisian champions Al Zahra' who beat the other Group 2 team, Al Hikmah 79-68.

Both teams include boast a lineup of professional players on their team.

Making their inaugural Arab Championship participation, Al Jazireh joined teams from nine Arab countries in the event hosted by Al Mal'ab Al Nabli.

The participating 16 men's teams have been divided into four groups:

Group 1: Al Mal'ab (Tunisia), Jahra' (Kuwait), Al Riyadi (Lebanon), Al Muroj (Libya).

Group 2: Al Zahra' (Tunisia), Al Hikmah (Lebanon), Al Jazireh (Jordan), Bofariq (Algeria).

Group 3: Zamalek (Egypt), Al Itihad (Tunisia), Al Itihad (Saudi Arabia), Al Bina' (Algeria).

Group 4: Al Wadi (Tunisia), Al Itihad (Egypt), Al Nasr (Libya), Ohud (Saudi Arabia).

In the opening match Al Mala' beat Kuwait's Al Jahra' 86-57. In other matches, Tunisia's Al Itihad beat Egypt's Al Zamalek 59-55, and Saudi Arabia's Al Itihad beat

Algeria's Al Bina' 64-57.

Second round matches start Friday.

Only six teams are taking part in the 7th Women's Championship. They include hosts Al Hilal, Al Safa' and Al Mal'ab of Tunisia, Egypt's Al Ahli, Hussein Dai of Algeria, and Lebanon's Homenetmen.

In previous Arab Championships, former First Division champions Al Ahli and reigning champs Al Orthodoxy represented Jordan but declined to participate this year.

Al Ahli are currently preparing for the First Division Championship and have started training under the supervision of their new Armenian coach Raffi Cholukyan, who was in charge of the Russian team at the 1992 Olympics.

Cholukyan was also former head coach of the Soviet Union's teams and 1973 European champion women's team.

Al Orthodoxy are currently preparing their team to retain the First Division title which starts April 13.

Their Under-22 team won the championship title last month and beat Syria's Al Wihdeh in a friendly match last week.

While Al Jazireh, whose members are mostly under-22 team players, conceded their two-year reign to Al Orthodoxy, they beat Syria's Al Jish and Al Itihad in friendly matches last month and have an improved team who are well-known for their unyielding, competitive spirit.

Under the guidance of head coach Fadi Sabbah, the team has been a strong contender in the Kingdom's First Division Championship for the past two years.

In the last competition they beat Al Ahli and had a sure shot at second if not first place but later faltered in the final round.

Al Jazireh are sponsored by Aramex, whose chairman Fadi Ghandour stressed that the championship is a great opportunity to test the team's readiness for the First Division Championship which Al Jazireh hopes to win for the first time in their history.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Vallecano hire third coach

MADRID (AFP) — Struggling Spanish First Division side Rayo Vallecano appointed Maximo Fernandez as their third coach this season after his boss Fernando Zambrano resigned by mutual consent on Monday. Zambrano, who only succeeded Francisco Garcia in February, announced his decision after a meeting with Jose Maria Ruiz Mateos, president of the Rayo Vallecano council, to discuss "the team's deepening relegation problems" — they are 17th only two points above the relegation zone. Zambrano coached the club to a 1-0 win over Real Madrid on February 20, the first league defeat of the season for the leaders, but they have won only once since then and were beaten twice at home by Real Betis last week. Betis beat them 2-1, 4-1 on aggregate, in their Spanish Cup quarter-final tie on Thursday and then beat them 4-0 in the league meeting on Sunday.

WTA boss to step down

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida (AFP) — Anne Person Worcester said Monday she will not seek another term as chief executive officer of the WTA Tour when her current term expires at the end of this year. Worcester, the highest-ranking female executive in professional sports, cites personal reasons for leaving the post she has held since September of 1994. Worcester, 36, has one child and is pregnant. "Leading the number one sport in the world for women has been an enormously gratifying experience and one which I feel extremely fortunate to have had," a statement from Worcester said. "However, my husband and I are expecting our second child in September and I plan to pursue other opportunities more consistent with my personal goals at this time," during her tenure, the WTA Tour saw a growth of over 600 per cent in television revenues and a 55 per cent growth in prize money since 1991. The WTA Tour's board of directors will begin a search for a successor to take over next January.

Battle purse bid set for March 31

LAS VEGAS (AFP) — A purse bid for the World Boxing Council heavyweight title fight between champion Lennox Lewis and unbeaten fellow Brit Henry Akinwande will be conducted in Mexico City in two weeks. The original bid offering was to have been last Friday but was delayed due to what a WBC spokesman called paperwork errors. The bout will most likely be in May or June and should lead to a matchup with the winner of next week's International Boxing Federation title fight here between champion Michael Moorer and Vaughn Bean, who is trained by ex-champion Joe Frazier.

Helissio favourite in Dubai

DUBAI (R) — French horse Helissio, winner of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, heads the probable 13-strong field for the \$4 million Dubai World Cup on March 29. Other European contenders include Japan Cup Winner Singpiel and the St. James' Palace Stakes winner Bijou d'Inde. "It looks a very open and competitive race, the field is of the highest quality," said Kevin Greely, racing secretary of the Emirates Racing Association. The final field will be announced on March 25.

Pires to stay at Metz until 1998

PARIS (R) — France winger Robert Pires, who has been courted by Newcastle and Paris St. Germain, has agreed to stay at Metz until after the 1998 World Cup finals. Pires, currently out for a month with a knee ligament injury, is under contract with Metz for a further three years and told club president Carlo Molinari at the weekend he would stay at least until the end of next season. The 23-year-old forward hopes to be back in France's squad for their World Cup warm-up tournament in June and keep his place for the Cup finals. He helped Metz, eighth in the French First Division, reach the third round of the UEFA Cup in which they were eliminated by English Premier League Newcastle in December.

Monaco Vialud returns for Everton

MONACO (R) — Monaco midfielder Laurent Vialud headed back to England on Monday for a final match trial with Premier League Everton, sources close to the French club said. "If I give satisfaction, there's a good chance it will happen," said Vialud, referring to his chances of joining Everton before the English transfer deadline of March 31. Vialud said Everton wanted to see him in action in a full match, but gave no further details. Monaco have given the 27-year-old, who will be a free agent at the end of the season, the go-ahead to pursue an immediate move to Everton after trials in the first week of March.

Boxing champion tests positive

BONN (R) — German Graciano Rocchigiani was caught cheating with drugs when he lost to compatriot Dariusz Michalczewski in a World Boxing Organisation (WBO) light-heavyweight title fight last August, German anti-doping sources said on Tuesday. Traces of the banned stimulant ephedrine were found in Rocchigiani's urine after the fight in Hamburg, they said. Officials at Cologne's respected drug-testing laboratory were due to announce the test at a news conference later on Tuesday.

Spurs' Johnson out after surgery

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (R) — The injury-ravaged San Antonio Spurs lost Avery Johnson for at least the next four games after the point guard underwent minor throat surgery Monday. Johnson had an abscess in his throat drained and was expected to remain hospitalised for two to three days while receiving intravenous fluids and antibiotics. Johnson, who is averaging 10.7 points and 7.3 assists per game, had missed the last two games due to strep throat, snapping a consecutive games played streak at 378, including a Spurs-record 296 in a row. He joins the long list of Spurs who have been sidelined this season by injury, including star centre David Robinson and forward Charles Smith, who have missed virtually the entire season, forwards Chuck Person, Dominique Wilkins and Sean Elliott and guards Vernon Maxwell and Vinny Del Negro.

Rams sign Jones from Raiders

ST. LOUIS (R) — The St. Louis Rams Monday signed unrestricted free agent linebacker Mike Jones, who started the last two seasons for the Oakland Raiders. Terms of the deal were not disclosed. The 27-year-old Jones started 31 of Oakland's 32 games over the last two seasons at right outside linebacker, leading the team in tackles with 105 in 1995. The Jones acquisition marked the fourth free agent signing for the Rams under new coach Dick Vermeil, but the first defensive addition. St. Louis previously signed running back Craig "Ironhead" Heyward, quarterback Mark Rypico and kicker Jeff Wilkins as free agents this off-season. Jones was originally signed by the Raiders as an undrafted rookie free agent in 1992 and won a starting job in 1995.

Real Madrid maintain lead

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain (R) — Two moments of inspiration either side of half time from striker Raul Gonzalez enabled Real Madrid to maintain their nine-point lead in the Spanish championship with a 2-1 win at Real Sociedad on Monday. A defence-splitting ball from Pedrag Mijatovic set up Raul for the first goal and Roberto Carlos rifled home the second after being put through by a cheeky backheel from the teenager. But the leaders' weakness in the air was once again exposed towards the end when Mutiu Adepoju pulled one goal back from a corner. Real's nearest rivals, Barcelona and Real Betis, each took comfortable victories over the weekend. The bad news for Fabio Capello's team came moments from the final whistle when Roberto Carlos was booked for time-wasting. With four yellow cards already to his name this season the Brazilian, who has not yet missed a minute of the league campaign, will have to sit out next week's home game with Zaragoza.

HK's jockey club vows race clean-up

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's jockey club vowed Tuesday to clean up the race tracks and punish any jockeys or trainers found guilty of race fixing in the territory's biggest horse-racing scandal, in which 37 people have been detained.

The club, which has a monopoly on racing and race gaming in the British colony, said it would go ahead with weekend races despite the turmoil of the biggest race fixing inquiry in more than a decade.

The territory's anti-corruption police meanwhile said they had freed 19 detainees on bail, but the probe was widening.

"The Hong Kong jockey club is determined to keep horse racing clean," Wilson Cheng, the club's information secretary told Reuters.

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Klinsmann to quit Bayern

MUNICH (AFP) — Germany's national captain Jurgen Klinsmann said Tuesday he would be leaving Bayern Munich at the end of the season.

Klinsmann, who returned to Germany from English side Tottenham in 1995 after many years abroad, complained earlier in the season that he was not happy with the defensive tactics at Bayern and the way he had been treated when he went through a bad patch.

A special clause allows him to leave Bayern before his contract ends on 30 June 1998, in the same way he left Tottenham after only one season.

But the announcement came as a surprise since the 32-year-old player seemed to have settled his differences with the club.



Jurgen Klinsmann of Bayern Munich shocked the German soccer establishment Tuesday when he announced he was going to leave Bayern Munich at the end of the season because he is not happy at the club (Reuters photo)

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- * Authenticated copy of the General Secondary Certificate
- * Authenticated copy of the College / University Graduated Certificate
- * Copies of previous experience
- * Copy of the Syndicate registration
- * Copy of the Authority to Practice Profession.



Israeli soldiers pass burning tyres set alight in protest on Tuesday against Israel's groundbreaking on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem to build a Jewish settlement there (Reuters photo)

Peace Now: Settler population up 9.4%

The Jerusalem Post

CLAIMING THE government is burying any hopes for peace and using the momentum of the current Har Homa crisis, Peace Now presented its latest report regarding changes in settlements under the present government, at a press conference Sunday. The report cited statistics and figures to uphold claims that during 1996 thousands of housing units had been approved for construction and sale in the West Bank and Gaza. In addition, the report stated that there had been an increase in the population in these areas of 9.4 per cent (approximately 13,000 settlers). According

to figures released by the Interior Ministry, the number of births in the areas for 1996 was 4,661. Mossy Raz, Peace Now spokesman and author of the report, said the renewal of settlement activity under the present government "had been done very quietly, behind the scenes." Peace Now leader Tali Reshef described the findings as "disturbing and proof that the current government is not interested in seeking peaceful solutions, or taking into account the needs of the Palestinians." He added that by continuing in the same way, any hopes for cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians in the future would be

dashed. The movement charged that up until the end of 1996, 4,000 units in Kiryat Sefer, Emanuel, the Jordan Valley and Ma'aleh Adumim had been approved for construction and an additional 3,000 units that had been frozen under the previous government had been released for sale. "This means an addition of approximately 15,000 settlers will move into these units," Raz said. Both Reshef and Raz claimed that the approval of such a large number were the direct result of the government's decision to cancel a ministerial committee that presided over construction in the territories and

transfer the powers to Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai. Avi Benayahu, Mordechai's media coordinator, refused to relate the figures mentioned in the report, but stressed that no new settlements had been established. Plans were approved, he said, according to the needs and natural development of the settlements, taking into account the governmental decisions and only after all legal aspects had been thoroughly examined. He dismissed the claim that there had been a population growth of 9.4 per cent saying the figures for the year were fairly similar to those that have been cited annually since 1993.

Velayati dismisses U.S. claim Iran is posing a threat to Gulf

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati on Tuesday dismissed a U.S. claim that Iran is a threat to the Gulf, saying the comments were aimed at selling more arms and undermining regional cooperation.

"If Iran is a threat you should ask the countries in the region," Mr. Velayati told reporters at the end of a two-day visit to Kuwait.

"I haven't heard — specifically during recent weeks and months — from the people in this region that they feel some threat from Iran," Mr. Velayati said after visits to Oman and Saudi Arabia and before heading to Qatar.

Mr. Velayati said remarks made on Monday by Deputy Defence Secretary John White that Iran is a threat to the Gulf were "unsubstantiated statements by him in this very sensitive area."

"The U.S. views Iran arming itself with great concern — we still view Iran as a threat to the region, especially as Iran exports terrorism," Mr. White said in Qatar during a tour of the region.

The U.S. embassy in Kuwait said Mr. White arrived here for a brief visit on Tuesday to "discuss issues of mutual concern" with Kuwaiti officials.

Mr. Velayati said the United States "doesn't have good intentions" towards Iran's efforts at confidence-building measures that could lead to greater cooperation on regional security issues.

"If they say 'okay, we are very happy to see that Iran and these countries are trying to make more confidence building, have more co-operation,' there is no justification for selling more arms to the people in this region," he said.

The Iranian foreign minister has been trying to reassure Gulf Arab states on security matters during a tour of the region to deliver invitations to the December meeting in Tehran of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Gulf Arab states have watched with varying degrees of concern Iran's growing military might in the region, and still look to the United States and other Western allies for their security.

Mr. Velayati said Iran was not looking for "conflict" or "superiority" but for "more cooperation" in the region, and repeated calls for Gulf states to guarantee their own security.

"We do believe that this regional cooperation is the only natural way to have real security in this part of the world," he said.

Sudanese opposition forces say they have retaken Chali

ASMARA (AFP) — The Sudanese opposition on Tuesday said its forces recaptured the strategic town of Chali in the Blue Nile state near the border with Ethiopia and killed or wounded hundreds of government troops.

"The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) forces deployed in the south of the Blue Nile state recaptured Chali on Monday night, two days after government troops invaded it," said the spokesman for the southern rebels, Yasser Arman.

"During the attack NDA forces destroyed a convoy of government troops comprising 1,500 to 2,000 soldiers, killing or wounding nearly two thirds of them," he told AFP from Asmara.

The opposition also seized 13 trucks, two T-55 tanks and a large amount of artillery and ammunition,

he said. "The same day the NDA shot down a helicopter a few kilometres southeast of Chali, killing its 14-member crew," he said.

Mr. Arman said the opposition was advancing on Bonji, south of Chali.

The NDA groups the southern rebel and northern opposition forces which launched an offensive in January in eastern Sudan to topple the Khartoum government.

On Sunday Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir said that government forces had recaptured Chali, and Bonji, which first fell to the opposition at the start of the offensive on Jan. 12, when other border towns were also seized.

General Bashir did not say when the towns had been recaptured.

"The battle has begun and will stop only when all of

our territories are liberated," he told a huge rally in Khartoum attended by the armed forces chief of staff.

Meanwhile the head of the key southern rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Colonel John Garang, has warned government troops in Kajo Kaji to evacuate the town "or else we will attack and seize it."

Meanwhile, Sudan and Uganda have agreed to hold negotiations in Iran in June to resolve a crisis between the two countries. Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Osman Mohammad Taha said in statements published Tuesday.

But Mr. Taha said he did not expect the talks to produce positive results because of Uganda's "direct support" for Sudanese opposition forces.

Bahrain rejects Amnesty appeal to drop trial

MANAMA (AFP) — Bahrain on Tuesday rejected Amnesty International's appeal to scrap the trial of 59 people accused of taking part in an Iranian-backed plot to overthrow the government.

A source at the Bahraini Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs told the official Gulf News Agency that Manama rejected the appeal by the human rights group, saying the "defendants are enjoying a fair and just trial."

He said the defendants were being tried in the presence of their lawyers and families.

"The defence lawyers were able to study the case and had access to the investigations, indictments and judicial confessions that the defendants made through a legal manner and without pressure or coercion," he said.

"Lawyers have met with the defendants and consulted with them in full freedom," he added.

The London-based group on Monday issued a statement expressing its "preoccupation" with the fate of those on trial in Bahrain's state security court, saying "some could be sentenced to death."

Amnesty said the trial of suspected members of the pro-Iranian Hizbollah-Bahrain which began on March 1 is "unfair" and said "the defendants, if they are sentenced, will not have the right to appeal." Rulings of the state security court cannot be appealed.

The court met on Monday, but the Bahraini press disclosed no details.

Lawyers said the final session would take place on Wednesday and a verdict is expected at the end of March or beginning of April.

Ties with Israel will stay cold for a long time — Mubarak

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said in an interview published Tuesday that his people would tell him to "go to hell" if he asked them to warm up their relations with Israel.

The relationship between Egypt and Israel "will stay cold, believe me. It will stay cold for a long time to come," Mr. Mubarak told the Israeli bi-weekly Jerusalem Report.

"How can we normalise ties with Israel when we see Israelis on CNN killing our brothers every day? It is too early to speak about (cooperation) when we see Israeli soldiers pointing their guns at Palestinian women," he said.

Egypt was the first Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, but Israel often complains that a "cold peace" reigns between the two countries.

Mr. Mubarak dismissed demands by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Egypt "educate" its people for peace and lower the tone of anti-Israeli

cartoons and editorials in the Cairo press. "Don't ask us to 'educate' our people for peace with Israel. They'll tell me to go to hell," he said.

"As long as the Palestinians are denied their rights, we won't have the courage to come to our brothers and Egypt and say, 'do this and that.' The Egyptian people simply won't listen to us," he said.

Mr. Mubarak said the peace process "was beginning to work" under former Israeli prime ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, but that since Mr. Netanyahu came to office in June "everything stopped."

"It took us so long to convince a few Egyptian businessmen to cooperate with Israelis. Then when the new government came to power in Israel, everything froze in place again," he said.

Mr. Mubarak warned of "terror that will be 10 times worse than anything we've seen before. Embassies, airlines, diplomats will all be

exposed to attack" if the peace process breaks down.

The Egyptian president also claimed Mr. Netanyahu had agreed to accept agreements his predecessors had made with Syria for the return of the Golan Heights, but then he made public statements which scuttled the deal.

"Netanyahu came to me and said he was ready to accept the original agreements 'with a few adjustments.' I went to (Syrian President Hafez) Al Assad and asked him and he didn't say no," Mr. Mubarak said.

"But three days later an aggressive statement came out of Israel to the effect that 'the Golan is ours and we will never give it back.' Assad called me said, 'thank you very much, Mr. President.'"

Mr. Netanyahu has refused to commit to unwritten agreements by Rabin and Mr. Peres, who Damascus claimed had made a verbal promise to return the entire Golan Heights, occupied by Israel from Syria in 1967.

Saddam grants Russia 'top priority' for trade with Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — President Saddam Hussein has given Russian firms "top priority" to buy Iraqi oil or sell goods to Baghdad under the oil-for-food deal with the United Nations, Iraqi Oil Minister Amer Rasheed said Tuesday.

Both sides agreed to "give new impetus to bilateral cooperation," General Rasheed said during a meeting with a Russian delegation led by Energy Minister Piotr Rodionov.

President Saddam has asked state institutions to give "absolute priority" to Russia, to sell crude to Russian firms or to receive humanitarian aid," he said.

Since the U.N. oil-for-food deal came into force in December, several Russian companies have signed deals for the delivery of a total of 25.2 million barrels of Iraqi crude.

The deal, the first easing of the sanctions imposed in 1990 after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, allows Iraq to export \$2 billion of oil six months to buy food and medicine for its people and to pay war reparations.

The two ministers were co-chairing the second meeting of a joint committee tasked with renewing bilateral cooperation, with

the first held in Moscow in 1994.

"Without our Russian friend's support in the U.N. Security Council, the oil-for-food deal would not have passed," Gen. Rasheed said.

He paid tribute to Moscow for helping win U.N. Security Council Committee approval for several food contracts, while accusing the "United States of blocking the conclusion of contracts in order to harm Iraq."

Food and medicine distribution has yet to begin, although oil exports resumed in December.

Two dozen U.N. observers are touring central and southern Iraq as they prepare to monitor the distribution of food and medicine under the deal with the United Nations.

U.N. sources said that the Iraqi government was fully cooperating with their plans to enforce proper distribution of the goods under the deal.

The United Nations plans to deploy 151 observers in Iraq as well as 23 customs agents to check goods as they arrive and 14 inspectors who will monitor oil exports. In addition, eight people will be based at U.N. headquarters in New York to

supervise the operation.

Around 56 observers are already in Iraq, U.N. sources say.

Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said the U.N. Sanctions Committee has approved only 26 contracts to buy food and medicine out of the 222 which have been submitted to it.

The approved contracts cover 460,000 tonnes of wheat, 60,000 tonnes of rice, and 405,000 tonnes of milk.

Informed sources in Baghdad said the first shipment, 13,000 tonnes of Thai rice, is expected to arrive at the Iraqi Gulf terminal of Umm Qasr in the middle of next week.

U.N. sources said six cargo ships carrying 174,000 tonnes of Australian and French wheat were also expected to arrive at the end of March and beginning of April in Aqaba as well as Umm Qasr.

Iraq has complained about the delay in distributing food and medicine.

U.N. sources said distribution might not begin before May, mainly because there would not be enough goods to distribute to the whole population.

Fears of bombing grow in Algeria after blasts kill 18

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerians were fearful of a new bombing campaign by militant radicals in the run-up to June 5 legislative elections, after blasts in three cities that killed up to 18 people, press reports said Tuesday.

Three car bombs went off Monday in the capital Algiers, all in the working-class Kouba district, a haven for radicals who oppose the government.

Security services said four people were killed and about 30 injured, but the Tribune newspaper reported that the blasts had left as many as 11 dead.

In Saïda, southwest of Algiers, seven people died when a bomb went off in the Boukhors district, scene of several explosions in the past, the Al Watan newspaper said.

Two other blasts shook Sidi Al Abbes, 400 kilometres southwest of Algiers, the Tribune reported. No one was killed, but property damage was said to be extensive.

No one claimed immediate responsibility for any of the attacks.

In Algeria, such claims may take days, even weeks to come.

But with elections in the offing, the finger of suspicion pointed at militants who began a campaign of violence after the Islamic Salvation Front was denied victory in 1992 legislative elections.

Some 60,000 have died since then, according to a toll compiled by the U.S. State Department.

With elections on the horizon, it asked, "how can one stop an upsurge in violence?"

One of Monday's blasts in Algiers came as a bus filled with civilian employees of the armed forces was passing a car packed with explosives.

The others happened at a bus stop in the Coopmad low-income district, where the fatalities included a 12-year-old girl. They recalled a month-long wave of attacks, from Dec. 23 through Jan. 21, which killed 48 people and injured more than 200 in the capital, according to an official toll.

Press reports said the real number of dead was more than 90.

On Jan. 22, the Armed Islamic Group (AIG), one of the best-known radical organisations, vowed to an unconfirmed communiqué to plant more bombs in Algiers and in Blida, 50 kilometres to the south, the Al Hayrat newspaper said.

Observers said Monday's bombings in Algiers were remarkable in that they took place in the same general area, going off at one-hour intervals.

For several months the authorities have anticipated a campaign of violence by those it brands "terrorists" to whip up media attention ahead of the elections.

At the same time, the government has been quiet regarding what measures it is taking to crack down on the militants.

Last weekend, the security services swooped down on the Casbah, the old quarter of Algiers and an AIG stronghold, following the deaths of three police officers.

Four militants were killed, press reports said.

Indian doctors discover 25-year-old tube in man's stomach

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian doctors discovered a four-inch long plastic tube inside a man's stomach which they believe was left there during a previous operation 25 years ago, the Hindustan Times reported. Apollo hospital surgeon Arun Prasad said the tube was discovered during an ulcer operation on J. Mehra. "It is possible that the doctors left the tube behind accidentally during an operation," Dr. Prasad said Monday. "It is a miracle." Mr. Mehra had been admitted on Friday with internal bleeding. Doctors said the tube had not caused the problem and was not linked to the ulcer.

Nepalese police raid massage parlours, arrest 29

KATHMANDU (AFP) — Nepalese police arrested 29 women and girls in raids on massage parlours here, the state-run news agency RSS said Tuesday. The Thamel district of Kathmandu, where the arrests were made, has more than 50 massage parlours, according to police records, which are popular with foreigners. Police took action following complaints from residents and the tourist committee. "After the raid, 14 women and 15 girls were taken into custody," the report said. "A police team at the Sobrakhattee ward police office, near Thamel, led by inspector Ranjan Koirala raided 11 massage parlours and caught red-handed a medical doctor and five other men, indulging in illegal explicit acts," it added. "But the police did not identify the doctor," it said. The women, still in custody in Kathmandu, are aged between 15 and 40 and are mostly rural women who came to the city looking for work, police said.

Mandela 'trembles' over meeting Diana

CAPE TOWN (AP) — Talk about a mutual admiration society. Princess Diana said she was "absolutely thrilled" to meet President Nelson Mandela on Monday, and he responded that he was "still trembling." Mandela praised Diana for her early work counselling people with AIDS and credited her with reducing prejudice against those with the deadly virus. "We saw her sitting on the beds of AIDS patients and shaking hands with them, and that changed perceptions dramatically" with regards to AIDS," Mandela said. Mandela also complimented Diana for visiting children in Angola who had been crippled by land mines, saying her gesture helped South Africa decide to destroy its land mines. Diana arrived Saturday for a private visit. Her brother, Earl Spencer, lives in Cape Town.

Singer signs autographs after missing opera

NEW YORK (AP) — Opera singer Cecilia Bartoli spent three hours at a record store greeting fans and signing autographs just a day after missing a widely broadcast matinee performance at the Metropolitan Opera. The Italian mezzo-soprano blamed a bad back for missing Mozart's "Così fan tutte" on Saturday. The Daily News cited sources at the Met as saying Bartoli failed to perform because conductor James Levine was ill with an ear infection. Bartoli sang the role of the maid Despina on Wednesday when Levine also was sick. For what was to have been Bartoli's second and final performance in the part this season, with millions listening on radio, Despina was sung by Marie Melaughlin.